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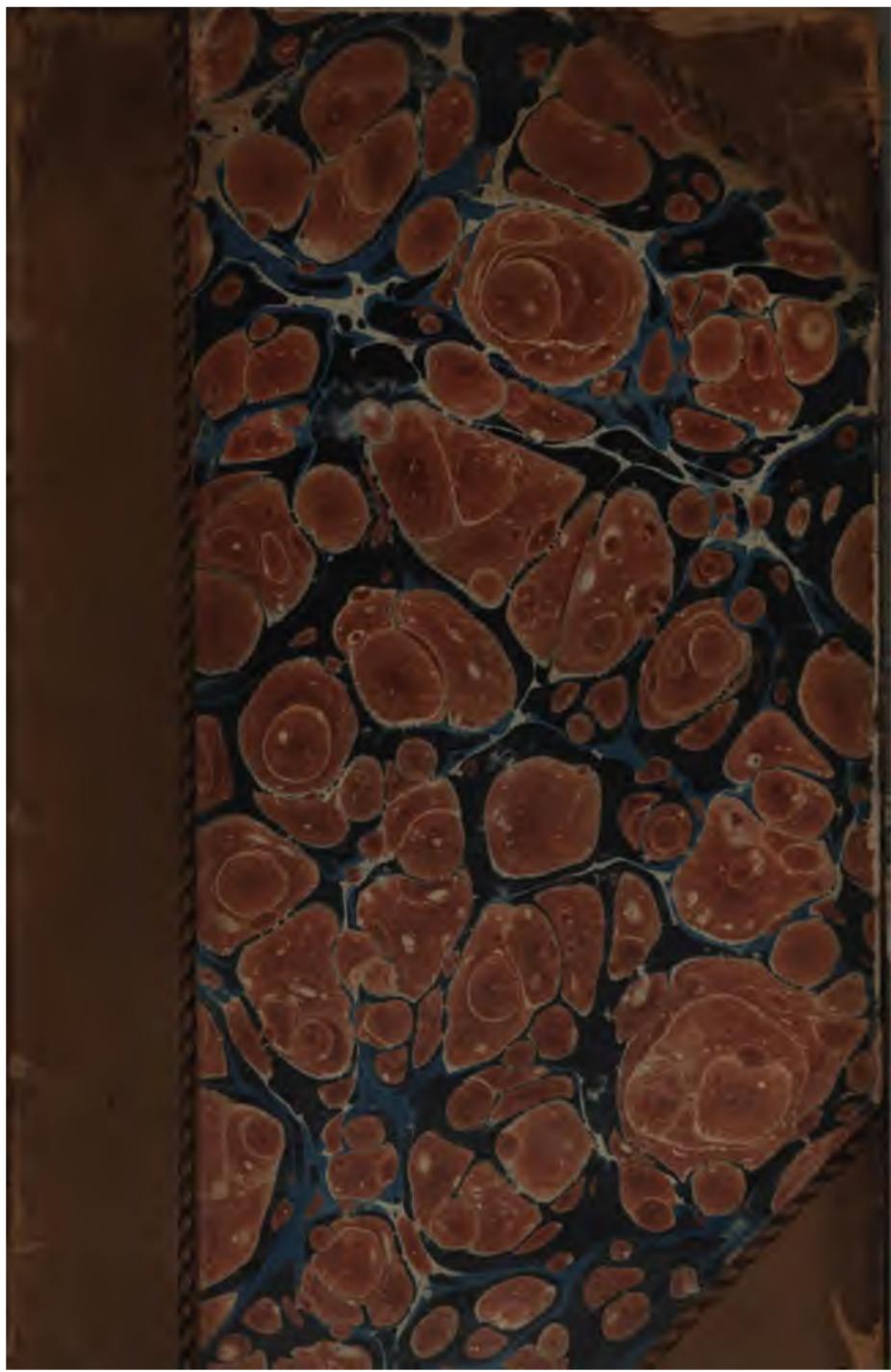
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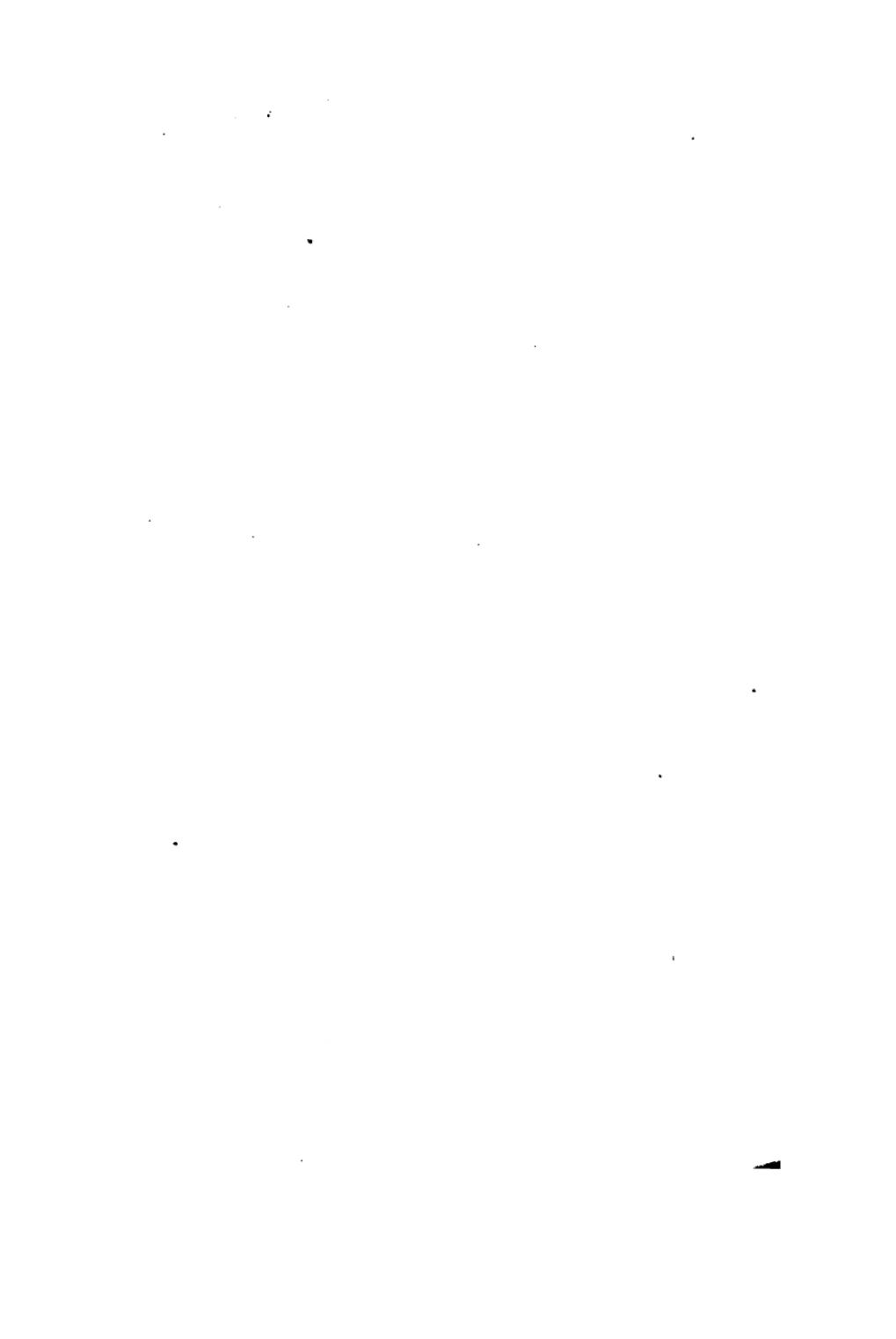
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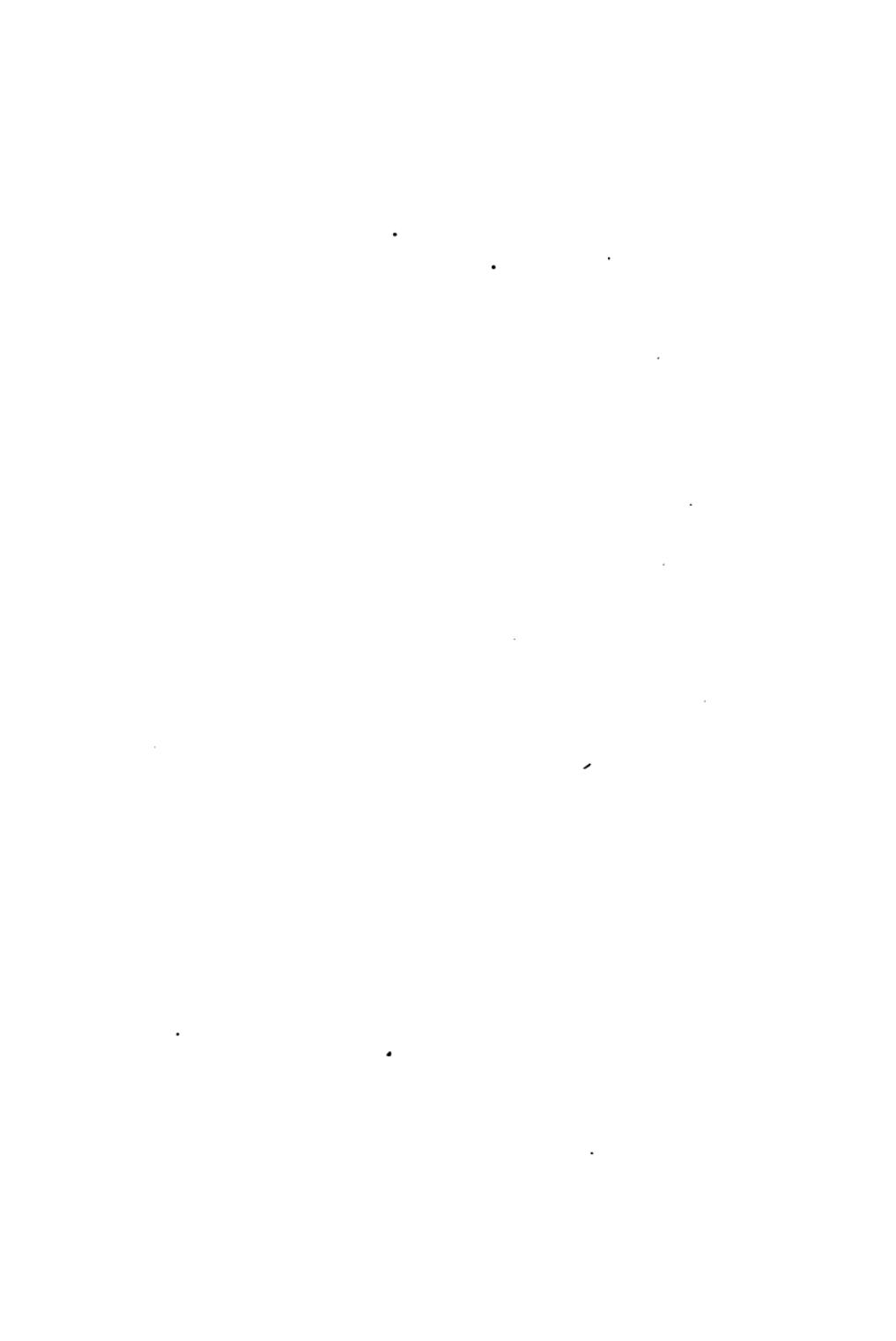
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PEACE FOR THE CHRISTIAN MOURNER.

PRINTED BY L. AND G. SEELEY, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.

PEACE FOR THE CHRISTIAN MOURNER;

OR,

EXTRACTS FROM VARIOUS CHRISTIAN AUTHORS,

ON THE

SUBJECT OF AFFLICITION.

SELECTED BY MRS. D. DRUMMOND.

WITH A

PREFACE BY THE REV. D. DRUMMOND, B.A.,
OXON, AND MINISTER OF TRINITY CHAPEL, EDINBURGH.

AND

AN ORIGINAL PAPER ON "CHRISTIAN CONSOLATION,"
BY THE REV. HUGH WHITE.

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PREFACE.

AFFLICTION and trial are the common lot of all. As God “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the just and the unjust,” so likewise does he measure out to all, both righteous and wicked, without any discrimination which may be traced by mortal eye, or scanned by mortal calculation, the bitter portions of the life that now is. “*Man*,” the whole family of Adam, and not a section only, “is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”

Were a being from another world to visit this mingled scene of light and shade, of day and night, he would in vain endeavour to discover which of all the human race were the objects of God’s favour, if he had no other clue to guide him than the external dispensations of his providence. His mistakes would be endless; and for this reason—this world is not a place of punishment, but of probation; it is not the hall of judgment, but the path to it; and all the ills and miseries of this sinful state, though consequent on transgression, are no more to be considered its final penalty, than the confinement of the condemned cell is to be reckoned, instead of the scaffold, the penalty for the violated laws of the land.

All then, as regards the infliction of outward trial, are in this world alike, whether it be bodily suffering, bereavement of friends, loss of property, prospects blighted, the favour and good opinion of the world forfeited ; but here the resemblance terminates, and from this point there is a wide distinction to be drawn between the men of this world and the people of God. Both are afflicted, both are subject to grievous calamities ; but how different the reception of trial, how different its effects here, how widely different,—yea, the difference between the torments of the lost and the happiness of the saved,—its results hereafter. In the expressive language of scripture, “The sorrow of the world worketh death ; but godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.” And, while the future and eternal punishment of the wicked is thus described with terrible significance, “He shall lie down in sorrow,” the light of a peaceful immortality is made to break joyously on the lot of the righteous : “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away :” “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”

But whilst in the general circumstance of trial there is a complete resemblance, and yet, both in its reception, and in its immediate and ultimate results, there is a marked distinction between the evil and the good ; it may not be uninteresting to notice some particulars connected with the inward experience of trial in the one case, and in the other.

I. The approach of trial is like the closing in of the shadows of night to the worldly man. The afflictive dispensations of God’s providence towards him are

surrounded with terror, and covered with sack-cloth ; the first whisper of the coming storm is like the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar, full of the breathings of despair. He hears nothing but the sound of "lamentation, and weeping, and mourning, and woe." He recognises, as it were, but the rustling of the robe of God's majesty, and shrinks, with alarm and dread, before this unseen, and, to his mind, terrible Oppressor. Fear, dismay, despair, yea, sometimes even hatred and blasphemy are the emotions of the hardened and impenitent heart, under the shock of trial,—“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast ; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain ; and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores ; and repented not of their deeds.”

It is not so with the child of God : trial comes to him arrayed in a sombre garb ; yea, it is often “very grievous ;” but the principle of heaven-born faith within teaches him to recognise a messenger of mercy, under the forbidding aspect of a severe reprobate ; and the bright, sunny beam of celestial hope within leads him to look through the threatening cloud, and enables him even in present darkness to rejoice in the prospect of the coming light. Thus did the aged Eli, when he heard of God's judgment to be poured upon his house, the very sound of which was so terrible as to make the ears of them that heard it tingle, bow his head, and say, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.” Thus too the afflicted Patriarch met the complicated evils which were sent upon him, “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither ; the Lord gave and the Lord

hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord ; " and thus likewise he reproved the ungodly blaspheming of his wife, " What ! shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil ? " The Shunamite likewise has left a memorable example of the spirit with which the child of God regards affliction ; when, visited with one of the heaviest bereavements which can beset humanity, she still breathed forth the subdued emotion of faith and hope—" It is well ! "

II. The spirit of the child of God is much more sensitive than that of the worldly man ; and therefore the same amount of trial is more keenly felt in the one case than in the other. The *effect* of sin has been the closing up and freezing of the finest and most exquisite sensibilities of our nature ; emotions which ought ever to have been gushing forth towards our heavenly Father and towards each other ; and the *effect* of the gospel is the bursting of these barriers, and the melting of these icy bonds, so as once more to permit the unimprisoned affections to flow out in a wide, deep current of impassioned love towards God, and benevolence towards all. Thus when sickness or loss of property fall to the lot of the worldly man, his sensations, generally speaking, are wholly selfish. Chained to a bed of languishing, he cannot gratify or indulge himself with the same freedom as before ; stripped of earthly possessions, he has not the means of ministering to his earthly pleasures and ambitious cravings. While, on the other hand, when the believer is suffering under either of these trials, his experience is of a much more painful and acute character, inasmuch as the sensibilities which are called forth are of a higher, and purer, and nobler origin.

The season of sickness is one in which he remembers his past coldness and heartlessness in the service of his God ; in the lone watchings of an enfeebled and agonized frame, he remembers how few returns of love his Master has experienced at his hands, and the pain of his bodily suffering is as nothing to the sharpness of his spiritual distress : “ He remembers God, and is troubled.” And if worldly means have been taken away, what a fruitful theme of mental sorrow is his, when he calls to mind opportunities lost, which might have been used for the promotion of God’s glory, and the good of his fellow-creatures. And thus, while sickness and misfortune are often, from the dull material of selfishness within, borne with mere stupid insensibility, the same afflictions open the way into the renewed soul for that which calls forth the tenderest and most painful sensations.

And as in the case of sickness and worldly calamity, so is this in a special manner true in the case of the removal of friends. When members of the same household have been knit together in the holy and heavenly bonds of the gospel of Christ, when they have tasted and rejoiced in the gracious pleasures of communion through their common fellowship with Christ,—they have begun to partake in the delights of an intercourse which nothing else on earth can equal, and which is in truth the commencement of the pure enjoyments of heavenly association. The more perfect, then, the love which unites, and the deeper and stronger the feeling which binds, the more acute and painful is the separation when one is taken and another left. Doubtless there is some sweetness in the trial—there is the strong hope of a re-union where sin can no longer blight, and loved

ones can no longer pine away and die—still every one who is at all acquainted with the workings of the human mind, must feel satisfied of the fact, that the pang of separation from a beloved object must be acute, just in the degree in which, before the blow descends, the tender emotions of the soul have been permitted to go forth and twine around a kindred spirit,—and what is it that nourishes and causes these emotions to bud and blossom, and expand in luxuriant loveliness? what, but the union of souls in the one faith, one baptism of the gospel.

And further, in those instances of terrible domestic sorrow, when one whose mind has been “lighted with wisdom from on high,” and who, while glorying in the prospects of a bliss, purchased by the work of Christ, for all his people ; from the very brightness of this hope is able all the more fully and truly to perceive the fearful doom which awaits the wicked ; when such an one leans over the death-bed of a relative, dear in earthly bonds, but of whose interest in the blood-sealed covenant there is *no hope*, ah ! a cup of sorrow like this cannot be drunk by the worldly man. He thinks all will yet be well, or he will not think of it at all, he quickly lulls his heart to rest by the consideration of the infinite mercies of God, without reference to his justice, or by some other equally vain subterfuge of a carnal and unrenewed heart ; but the agonized soul of the other has caught a glimpse of that darkness and thick gloom which, with its eternal shade, has closed in around the lost for ever.

III. The prevailing desire of the worldly man under affliction, is in any way, or by any means, to be relieved from it. He looks upon it as an infliction,

as a dire calamity; and spares no effort to throw off the burden from his mind. He visits new scenes, that in the perpetual change of residence, and the continued excitement of novelty, the sharpness of his natural sorrow may be worn down. He rushes into society, that in the giddy mazes of fashion, or the more refined stimulus of literary and scientific intercourse, he may escape from his own thoughts; or he plunges into the vortex of worldly pleasure and sensual indulgence, and for a time endeavours to forget his griefs by the maddening draughts of dissipation and wild profligacy.

How different is the experience of the Christian! Though no chastening is for the present joyous but grievous to him; though he feel even more acutely than the other the soreness of trial, and though he desires also the removal of the burden, yet there is ever the condition coupled with the desire, “*nevertheless not my will but thine be done.*” Painful though the process be through which he is passing, yet he knows it to be for “*his profit,*” and therefore the *use* of the trial rather than its *removal* is most considered. How often does the stricken soul of Zion’s mourner breathe itself forth to God in the earnest supplication, “*Oh that this affliction may be sanctified to me! Oh that it may yield peaceable fruits!*” *Oh that I may never lose the blessed nearness of my God and Saviour, as the help and consolation of his people, which I have found in trouble!*” And though he is privileged to cry, “*Remove thy stroke away from me, I am consumed by the blow of thy hand,*” yet does he anxiously follow up the wish with the earnest prayer, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be*

any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The true follower of Jesus can tolerate any trial, can endure any pain, and be a conqueror in all, but the pain of unmortified sin, and the trial of an unsanctified heart.

IV. There is one species of trial which the believer endures, but which is unknown to the natural man—the searchings and provings of an awakened and convicted conscience. The enormity of sin, its fatal and accursed power in the soul, which though in part broken in the renewed creature, is still sufficiently strong to cause a mighty struggle between the flesh and spirit, in the body of sin and death ;—the thought of a pure God looking on an impure child—of a holy Saviour, followed with the wretched inconsistencies of a professed obedience—of a Holy Spirit, grieved by natural stubbornness and earthly appetites ;—the remembrance of ordinances abused, privileges unimproved, resolutions made and forgotten, opportunities of devotedness and zeal for God neglected, coldness of heart in his service, faithlessness in bearing testimony to his love, continual doubts of the certainty of his promises—these, and numberless others of the same character, which the mind of every true believer will but too easily suggest, are trials of which the world can know nothing; but which often cause the child of God, even when external circumstances are prosperous, to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to go softly in the bitterness of his sorrow.

V. But while in this respect the heart of the believer alone knoweth its own bitterness, it is also true that a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy. As his trials abound, so also do his consolations. To the worldly man, the mingling of joy and sorrow, the

tear of grief, with the smile of blessed hope, is unknown. He knows not how to mourn over an un-sanctified heart, but he likewise knows not the triumphant joy, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory." He knows not

"The daily war, the daily strife,
The rule of grace, the power of sin."

He is unacquainted with the cares of a Christian, but he also is unacquainted with the sweetness of taking the cares of a burdened heart to one who careth for us. He experiences not the weariness of Zion's pilgrimage, but oh! he also experiences not the joy of having "the valley of Achor made a door of hope," and the rain filling the pools of the valley of Baca. Trial may have led him to regard this world as a wilderness, but it is the believer's portion to feel the conviction, that it is a wilderness in which God "speaketh comfortably to him." To the one indeed sorrow is an unmitigated evil, but to the other it is the key to the very storehouse of joy; it is but the uneasy stepping in a rough journey, while the eye rests in blessed hope upon the clear outline of the well-known hills which encircle the wanderer's loved abode—his own home.

"A good man, lying upon his bed of sickness, and being asked which were the most comfortable days that he ever knew," cried out, "Oh, give me my *mourning* days, give me my *mourning* days again, for they were the *joyfulest* days that I ever had.* Here indeed we have a proof and illustration of the truth of the scriptural paradox, "sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing."

* Brookes' Works.

Thus has the experience of the believer respecting affliction, especially in contrast with that of the natural man, been slightly touched upon ; and since it is evident, that he is subject to many trials—that his mind under the power of the gospel is rendered peculiarly sensitive to the pains of trial—that he experiences some afflictions which are known only to God's people—while at the same time he knows how to recognize ‘a smiling face behind a frowning Providence ;’ and is ever able, in the midst of sorrow, even when “his soul is melting for heaviness,” to “joy in the God of his salvation,”—since this is the general character of his experience, it may not be inexpedient to point out some cheering points of encouragement, and to record some words of counsel and instruction connected with this subject.

I. The object of the gospel is *not* to make men incapable of *feeling* sorrow,—to dry up every fountain of grief in the renewed mind during the present life. Some persons have looked on the gospel in this light, as intended to abstract man altogether from the common sympathies of humanity, and to shut him up in a cold dreary world of his own, with a heart steeled under the influence of a religion of stoicism, and his affections robbed of all genial warmth, so as no longer to be capable of smarting under the many evils of this troublous scene. The cold abstraction of unfeeling monkery is a sufficiently clear illustration of this opinion. But nothing can be more opposed to the warm, gentle, lovely spirit of the gospel. No where is there an injunction *against sorrowing*. The very expression of St. Paul, “that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope,” proves not that all grief is forbidden, but only worldly grief, the sor-

row which worketh death. And, in a word, in order to shew the genial spirit of the gospel in its warmest colouring, we have but to point to him who was called “the man of sorrows,” who was “acquainted with grief,” who shed tears over the sorrow of the bereaved sisters of Bethany, and who mourned over the hardness of heart and fatal unbelief of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

II. The design of the gospel then, is not to harden the heart against the feeling of sorrow; but to sanctify that feeling, and give it a right direction; to keep it within the bounds of submission to the will of God, and cheerful acquiescence in his dispensations; to check all murmuring, and repining, and hard thoughts of God; to lead the believer to glorify God “in the fires” of tribulation, as well as beside “the waters of quietness;” that he may be, to the praise of God’s grace, not only on the mount of transfiguration, where all is bright around him, but also in the valley of humiliation, in the darkness of Gethsemane, when his soul is full of troubles, and the waves and the billows of trial are going over him.

‘ Grace does not steel the faithful heart,
That it should know no ill;
We learn to kiss the chastening rod,
But feel its sharpness still.’

III. Let then the tear of earthly sorrow flow freely, so that it be of a godly sort, and that we are able to say with the Psalmist, “Put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?” Let the mind breathe forth its moan of bitter anguish, so that it be blended with the hallowed influence of faith, and hope, and love, and thus ascend in sanctified union to the throne of God, there to be recognized alone by

the prayer of resignation, “ Thy will be done.” So will the object of trial be promoted; affliction will be *felt*, but it will not “ cast us down; ” it will disclose to us our own weakness, while it shews us “ wherein our great strength lies.” “ Tribulation will work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.”

And finally, let the child of God be diligent in the use of all those means so graciously supplied for the hour of trial.

Let him seek for closer communion with God. “ Is any afflicted, let him pray.” When earthly friends are gone, the one Friend remains,

‘ Whose love is greater than a brother’s,
Costly, free, and knows no end.’

When the skill of earthly physicians fail, the balm of the Physician of souls is as efficacious as ever. When all earthly cisterns are broken down and drained, prayer unlocks the never-failing fountain, and the weary, parched wanderer drinks of the brook by the way, and lifts up his head with joy.

Let him go to the *mourner’s book*, that book written by a God of consolation for the children of sorrow. Let him take the “ glad tidings ” to his sad heart—the “ good word ” to his smarting spirit—the “ story of peace ” to his afflicted soul ;—let him cover his sorrows with the good things of the gospel, the shining garments of salvation, and from the “ gracious word ” of God draw forth notes of praise which shall sound loudly, and swell highly above all the pantings of his troubled mind, “ My soul melteth for heaviness ; strengthen thou me according to thy word.”

Let him take the example of God’s servants, in their “ suffering affliction, and patience ; ” let him

think of those holy men who have been “ destitute, afflicted, tormented ;” who have borne the burden and heat of the day ; who have toiled up the steep ascent of Christian experience before him ; and, learning from them the fierceness of trial, the strength in which they overcame, the faithfulness with which they served God with breaking hearts and sinking bodies ; let him press on after them in the path of life, bearing the cross that he may wear the crown ; let him search into the records of God’s church, and from every afflicted saint learn a lesson never to be forgotten ; let him, as he ascends in the history of the past, pluck a rose from every thorn, until, from the ranks of the blood-stained army of martyrs, and of the faithful witnesses of Jesus, he casts himself at the feet of his own suffering Lord, to learn the highest lesson, to fill his soul with the noblest example of one who “ suffers according to the will of God.”

It only remains for the writer to express his conviction, that the present work is calculated to fill an important place in the library of the Christian, which has hitherto remained vacant. Many admirable works have been written on the subject of affliction, but the greater number of them, for the most part, take up only certain sections of the subject, while others again are, from their size, not fitted for general use. It has been the object of the compiler of this volume to select, from various authors, some of the most valuable and interesting remarks on affliction ; and while thus endeavouring to leave no part of the subject untouched, to bring, at the same time, into the compass of a small volume, and under an ar-

rangement rendering every facility of reference to the reader, the experience of holy men of God regarding different kinds of trial. During the season of affliction, the mourner cannot be expected, or perhaps has not the means of searching into the works of Christian authors, to discover their thoughts and views ; it is therefore hoped that this work may prove useful at such periods, and, placed in the hands of the chastened child of God, be the means, under God's blessing, of leading them to forget the acuteness of their sorrow in the boundless love of him who is alone the Comforter of his people.

The authors from whose works the materials of this volume have been collected, are the following :—

Letters of S. Rutherford.	Romaine's Letters.
Letters of Lady Powerscourt.	Buchanan's Comfort in Affliction.
Dr. Love's Letters,	
Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs.	The Works of the Rev. Hugh White.*
Jones' Basket of Fragments.	Newton.
Hawker's Morning and Evening Portion.	Venn.
Hill's "It is Well."	Blunt.
Case on Affliction.	Goode.
Rev. C. Bridges' Exposition of the cxixth Psalm.	Gouthier.
	Bradley.

* The Compiler has to explain that the permission of the Rev. H. White has been freely given for the large and copious extracts from his writings which will be found in this volume; as well as most gratefully to acknowledge his kindness in contributing an original composition expressly for the work.

There are also one or two original contributions from the Rev. D. Drummond.

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PART I.

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PART I.

THE DESIGN AND END OF AFFLICITION.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE PURPOSES OF GOD, IN SENDING AFFLICION TO HIS PEOPLE.

THE Bible affords solid ground of comfort under trial, in the views which it presents of the *uses* and *ends* of affliction. . . . Being provided for in the covenant of grace, and made the matter of a promise to the redeemed, chastisements are to be considered among the *privileges* of God's people. It is true, that had they not sinned, they would have been exempted from suffering, and their trials are therefore, in one sense, the consequence of guilt. But it is equally true, that they are not now awarded as the wages, or penal effects of transgression, but subor-

dinated to a plan of mercy, and sent for purposes of good. They come from God, not as the messengers of his avenging wrath, but as tokens of his paternal love ; and in sending them, he acts, not as an offended judge, awarding punishment, but as a kind and forgiving father, meting out such discipline and correction to his children as they severally require.

It does not follow from these remarks, that every one who is visited with affliction is a child of God, or, that in every instance, affliction has the effect of instating the sufferer in that blessed condition. Like every other means, its effect will depend on the mode in which it is improved by the individual ; and hence it is said to produce "*the peaceable fruits of righteousness;*" only in those who are suitably "*exercised thereby.*"

But while these words do not affirm that every one who is severely afflicted is a child of God, they do, on the other hand assure us, that no amount, and no continuance of sorrow, can be a proof that we are *not* members of his family ; and this discovery may well be considered as a very valuable and consoling one. For, when a believer is visited with severe affliction, and especially if his trials be numerous, as well as severe, and if they be continued in his person, or in his family, for a great length of time, while many around him are enjoying uninterrupted prosperity, and speedily relieved from slighter trials, he will be apt to entertain the awful thought, that God would not thus deal with him, if he were really one of his children, and either despondingly to question his own interest in the divine favour, or through the malignant suggestions of Satan, to cherish hard thoughts of God. Many have experienced the sore

trial of their patience and faith ; but let it be impressed on our hearts that it is not from the outward dispensations of providence, but from the inward qualities of our own character, that we are to draw the evidence of our state in the sight of God ; that no pressure of affliction, however severe, and no continuance of it, however protracted, can prove that we are not the objects of God's fatherly love, or that we are cast out of his favour ; and that though the aspect of a frowning providence may well be improved, as a call to vigilant self-inspection, that we may discover whether God has any controversy with us, and for what cause,—yet we should not, on any occasion, venture to regard affliction as a proof of reprobacy. On the contrary, “ *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth* ;” and if our chastisements seem to be more grievous and more protracted than those of others, we may rest assured, either that our corruptions are so strong as to require a severe remedy, or that God is thereby preparing us for some great end —for some fiery temptation, or some eminent service in his church on earth, or, perhaps, for a speedy translation to his own presence in heaven.

But whatever may be the immediate reason for his dealing with us, let us rest assured, that every affliction which he sends on any of his children, is the fruit of paternal love ; that he has a most holy, wise, and benevolent purpose in view, and that, here or hereafter, we shall have reason to acknowledge, with many who have gone before us, that God “ *hath done all things well*,” and that in “ *very faithfulness he hath afflicted us.*” *

* Buchanan's Comfort in affliction, p. 115.—Heb. xii. 6. *Whom the Lord loveth, &c.*

What *end* has God in view in the trials of this life? Great, salutary, blessed ends. One is this, to save us from condemnation and death—Grand, great, glorious end! When we rightly view it, we should be ready to say, ‘Let thy stroke be ever so heavy, so that this end be answered.’ Afflictions alone save none; but they have frequently been the means of saving millions. They awake us out of our sleeping and slumbering. You are not aware how quickly you go to sleep, and how fast you sleep. Like Jonah, you would not wake but in the storm. Many would have slept on to their dying day, if not thus roused. Afflictions bring us to consider our ways. We go on carelessly and lightly, till the Lord bring the soul into trouble; then we ask, Am I right? Am I safe? Are my sins blotted out? Afflictions call upon us to turn to God. How many were running on to destruction, till they heard, “Turn you at my reproof?” I think when the people of God consider the grand end He has, it will reconcile them to suffering, let the trial be ever so cutting; let it sink the heart and flesh, yet they will kiss the rod.

Another end in affliction, is to prepare us for the heaven of heavens. O did we but see, understand, and believe this! God is at work; a work of grace purifying us in the furnace for glory. How ought we to bow our heads in meek submission, and say, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.” No part of God’s way is less understood than the way of suffering. If the Lord crosses our will, inclination, and desires, and destroys our plans, do we not prove our ignorance and corruption by the feelings we indulge? We are indeed to hear the rod; we are not

to despise the chastening of the Lord ; we are to feel—but if the Lord touch our property, family, reputation, what strange groans in the streets of Zion ! It is the grand aim of most to avoid afflictions, or to come out of them. We should avoid them if it is in our power, but if they come we should welcome them : and the question with us should be, How shall I profit by them? . . .

In the dark day, consider, What are our sufferings or afflictions to the afflictions of Christ. You taste the cup ; He drank it up. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. He was perfected through suffering. I am ashamed of myself, I am ashamed of you, when we shrink from sufferings from a Father's hand. Nature must suffer, but let the soul be in tune. Recollect it is God's way of bringing home his people. We must go to the triumphs of heaven through the groans of time. Let us only follow the Lord fully, leaning on the Beloved. The Lord never afflicts without necessity. If you could do without sufferings, God would never lay one upon you. There is a need be for every hour of trial or suffering, or the Christian would not go through it. They would be eternal losers, if they had them not. Correcting, giving pain and trouble to his people, is one of the Lord's strange works. There is a kind of necessity laid upon God ; it is the plan of salvation. He afflicts in measure. Never was one who weighed things so exactly. Not a grain too little or too much. Not a bitter medicine, one moment too soon or too late. He is a punctual God. It is in love. The child cannot understand that what is giving him pain is in love. We are ignorant as children. May the Lord teach us to know

his wisdom and love, and may our souls bless him *at all times and under all circumstances.**

There is a great difference in the constitution of the soul. The cross of one will not do for another. Every child of God shall have just that which is a cross indeed. His trials also may be numerous. David cries, "All thy billows are gone over me." When one set of trials is gone, we think all is over. So we in our ignorance, when we have weathered one storm, say, 'It will be fine weather now.' No, brethren; more waves and storms to-morrow. There is a need to keep the soul on the wing for heaven. Many of God's dearest children have gone through very dark days. You do not like the billows, I know, but can you do without them? Has God made a mistake? If the earth had no frosts, it would produce nothing but briars. Let trials be ever so severe, they are short. The time is very near when the Lord Jesus will say to you, 'Child, you have carried the cross for my sake; lay it down, take this crown and wear it with me for ever.' What are your drops of affliction to this ocean of grace? What are you grains of trouble to the exceeding weight of glory? What are your specks of darkness to the light of eternal day? †

The hot furnace is Christ's work-house, the most excellent vessels of honour are found therein. . . . Affliction is God's forge, wherein he softens the iron heart. There is no dealing with the iron while it remaineth in its native coldness and hardness; put it

* From Jones's "Basket of Fragments," p. 98. † Ibid. p. 256.

into the fire, make it red-hot there, and you may stamp upon it any figure or impression you please.*

A Christian without trials would be like a mill without wind or water; the contrivance and design of the wheel-work within-side would be unnoticed and unknown, without something to put it in motion from without. Nor would our graces grow, unless they were called into exercise: the trials and difficulties we meet with not only prove, but also strengthen the graces of the Spirit. If a person were always to sit still, without making any use of his legs or arms, he would probably soon lose the power of moving his limbs at last; but by walking and working he becomes strong and active.†

. . . . However God in his wisdom may deal with men who have their portion in this life, the life of a believer shall be a life of suffering. It is so appointed by heaven's decree, there is no reversing it, neither should we wish to do so. The life of the Christian is one of trial, in order to bring him from folly, vanity, and idols, to live on the Saviour. We are prone to wander, to keep at a distance. God takes great pains to make us willing to come to Christ; that is the reason the rod is so often laid upon you, and upon me; to wean us from every thing else, and to bring us where alone we can be happy; to teach us rightly to value Christ. I have told you you will have great trials, and for what end; I will now mention some.

* Case, p. 106, 107.

† Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 209.

First, sufferings of body.

This is a trial appointed for some of God's dearest children. Let them not count it a mark of displeasure, nay, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations and trials. It is a mark of your Father's intention to purify that body which he will finally make like his own glorious body. Personal trials, if they continue long, oh, how deep are they ! For a few days we may have some patience ; but when long, how trying ! We often suffer also as deeply in our *friends* as in personal sufferings. Our love is one source of our sorrows, from which our deepest trials flow. I can speak from experience, I have had more affliction for friends than ever I had on my own account. But there are trials deeper yet; trials of a soul duly awake to its concerns ; doubtful whether heaven is his or not ; doubtful if he shall obtain pardon. Oh the torments of a mind in such a state ! What mean the dealings of God in this ? Cannot a soul be taken to heaven without all this ? Ah, brethren, if he were, heaven would be no heaven in comparison of what it will be to him. We are brought from the deepest, darkest pit, to sit on the throne of glory. Let God take his own way ; you may quarrel with it, but you cannot correct it. Believers do not dream of a Paradise below ; do not look for victory in the field of battle, for enjoyment and rest in the midst of conflicts. What you have to see to now is this : live men of prayer—lean on the arm of omnipotence—feed on the fulness of Christ—adorn the profession of God your Saviour in all things. We have also trials peculiarly from God. The soul must be put peculiarly in this furnace in Zion to purify it. We must be in something of that darkness under

which our Lord was when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This cup we shall *taste* of, to *drink* it would kill us; but we must know what it is, in order that we may enjoy and triumph in eternal day. And now the ungodly man says, "Well, if this is the Christian's portion, it will be happier for me to go on as I am." But stop! half the story is not told. In Jesus, there is supply, shelter, defence, safety. Oh! what does the believer find, or what may he find in Jesus,—he is a refuge from the storm! "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."* Under his wings there is shelter—no common refuge. Here we may shelter until every storm be overpast: till we are brought into the land of tranquillity, where there are no more waves, but a sea of glass. May we flee into the wounds of Jesus, into the clefts of that Rock; and there abide till all storms are blown by, by the breath of his grace. "*A shadow from the heat.*" It would fail me to speak of this. When the anger of God burns as a consuming fire, Christian, where would you find a covering from this, but in Christ? O let us live to him. You will if you live *upon* him.†

Children of God, the way to heaven is through much tribulation; it is the appointed way, not so accidentally, but *designedly* "The path of sorrow, and that path alone, leads to the land where sorrow is unknown." Expect your portion: it would be strange indeed were you to go to heaven by any other way. Do not all the people of God find it so? Different degrees, indeed, and sorts of tribulation, but still

* Prov. xviii. 10.

† From Jones's "Basket of Fragments," p. 56.

something to deaden earth to them, and to make them flee to God as their only rest. If the people of God travel part of the day in sunshine, they also have part of it in mist and clouds ; should the morning be bright the evening will be stormy. Troubles appear to be in God's catalogue of mercies, and we cannot do without them. How unwelcome to nature ! the heart sinks under them. What fools are we ! how unbecoming for Christians ! As if something occurred unknown to God, we look at the outward causes, and it is on that account that troubles are unwelcome. But infinite wisdom has ordained the tribulation of the whole church, and of every individual in it : he has mixed and filled every one's cup, and knows what cup to put to the lips of each ; what will suit the constitution and complaints. Our conflicts and trials are our greatest mercies ; the things that dry up our spirits for all below ; they teach many a lesson which we cannot and will not learn but in the furnace in Zion. There are tens of millions of witnesses to the truth of this ; they will tell you that when at ease lessons were set before them which they could not learn ; but in tribulation they learned them, and they came out of the furnace, saying, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.*" *

Let the afflicted Christian learn to distinguish between the world's remedy and that which is provided in the gospel. To be favoured with a realizing sense of those words—" *I know their sorrows*" †—is a sweet balm for every trouble, even the bitterest and most

* Psalm cxix. 67. From Jones's "Basket of Fragments," p. 95.

† Exodus iii. 7.

poinrant that a renewed heart can feel—the sorrow for sin. It is the path and privilege of a believer to imitate Jesus—to take the cup of suffering as from a Father's hand, from whom he may be assured of constant and adequate support. What is pain, sickness, or even death itself, compared with alienation of the heart from God? This is the grand evil, from which all others proceed. Let us, then, think less of our own cup, whatever it may be, since it will surely prove medicinal; and think more of him, who drank a cup of wrath even to the dregs, in order to provide for us a cup of consolation. Eminent Christians have generally an especial discipline, in proportion to that usefulness to which they are designed. Thus St. Paul had a thorn in the flesh; and many other travellers to Zion have likewise found something rankling, festering, and harassing them, like a thorn which they were unable to extract. For this divine discipline we should stand prepared. Luther writes to John of Hesse, ' You have entered the ship with Christ: what do you look for? Fine weather? Rather expect winds, and tempests, and waves to cover the vessel, till she begins to sink. This is the baptism with which you must be first baptized; and then the calm will follow, upon awakening Christ and imploring His help; for sometimes he will appear to sleep for a season.' The process of affliction is intended to prepare and make room in the heart for the grace of Christ; because the tendency of the human heart is to pride and self-dependence.*

O my soul, look above this world of sorrows! Hast

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, Remarks by Cecil, p. 506.

thou so long felt the smarting rod of affliction, and no better understood its meaning? Is not every stroke to drive thee hence? Is not its voice like that to Elijah—“*What doest thou here?** Dost thou forget thy Lord’s prediction, *In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace?*” Ah, my dear Lord, I feel thy meaning; it is written in my flesh, engraved in my bones. My heart thou aimest at: thy rod drives, thy silken cord of love draws; and all to bring it to thyself. Lord, can such a heart be worth having? Make it worthy, and then take it to thyself.†

..... We cannot forbear to mark the combined wisdom and love manifested in our Saviour’s allotment for his people, “*In the world ye shall have tribulation.*” This is the gracious rod by which he scourges back his prodigal children to himself. This is the fatherly discipline by which he preserves them from being poisoned with the sweetness of carnal allurements, and keeps their hearts in a simple direction towards himself as the well-spring of their everlasting joy. With all of them this one method has been pursued. All have been exercised in one school; all have known the power of affliction in some of its varied forms of inward conflict and outward trouble, and the experience that has been derived from this source, has given abundant evidence that the pains have not been bestowed upon them in vain. “*Now*” is each of them ready to say—“*Now have I kept thy word.*” I never prized it before, I could indeed scarcely be said to know it. I never

* 1 Kings xix. 13.

† Baxter.

understood its comforts until affliction expounded it to me. Heavenly Father ! let every cross, every affliction which thou art pleased to mingle in my cup, conform me more to my Saviour's image, restrain my heart from its daily wanderings, endear thy holy ways and word to my soul, and give me sweeter anticipations of that blessed home where I shall never wander more, but find my eternal happiness in "keeping thy word."*

"*Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*" James v. 11.

There is something uncommonly soothing and consolatory in these words, concerning the Lord's grace "that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." *Very pitiful!* Sweet consideration to the child of God, under affliction ! For it speaks in the tenderest and most endearing manner, upon all such occasions, that if afflictions abound, while the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy, there must be a *need be* for them. My soul, keep this thought always uppermost in thy remembrance ; and carry it about with thee, to help on thy mind to suitable exercises on this account: hadst thou as much wisdom, and as much love for thyself, and what concerns the most material interests, as Jesus hath, and is using for thee, the most painful exercises thou art now called to, and which thou art apt to shrink from, would be among the subjects of holy joy. And mark, farther, what the Apostle saith,— "*Ye have seen the end of the Lord, that is, in the issue of Job's trials.*"

* Rev. C. Bridges on the CXIXth Psalm, ver. 67.

Who that reads the Patriarch's history, can doubt but that the Lord all along intended the whole for his servant's happiness, as well as his own glory? In all thine exercises, my soul, look to the *end of them*. Some blessed purpose, depend upon it, thy Jesus hath in view in all, and he will accomplish it. In the mean time, never forget that "the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy," in all the afflictions of his people, *he is afflicted*. And what a memorable scripture is that—"His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." Judges x. 16. Precious Jesus! all is well. In the sorrows of thy children, thou bearest a part; and the largest part is thine, the heaviest end of every cross thou carriest. The cup of our affliction is not bitter like thy cup of trembling; for through thy love in redemption the gall and wormwood are taken out. There is no bitter wrath in the chastisements of a kind father under sin; for thou hast borne the wrath when made a sin and curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in thee. Often, my soul, let these sweet consoling thoughts refresh thee. Thy Lord, thy Jesus, "is very pitiful and of tender mercy!" *

..... Afflictions are God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right hand and on the left, we should hardly be able to keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it. When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness or other affliction reduce us! Every Christian, as well

* Hawker's "Evening Portion."

as Luther, may call affliction one of the best school-masters; and, with David, may say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Many thousand recovered sinners may cry, O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted! Not only the green pastures, and still waters, but the rod and staff, they comfort us. Though the word and Spirit do the main works, yet sufferings do unbolt the door of the heart, that the word hath easier entrance.*

Thus we see from these general remarks that God's design in afflicting us is to do us good, that *whom He loves, He chastens*, and that there is a needs be for every trial, for every chastisement, and that if used aright, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Let us now proceed to consider one of the principal designs of God in putting us into the furnace of affliction.

* Baxter's Saints' Rest.

CHAPTER II.

AFFLICION ESPECIALLY MEANT FOR THE TRIAL,
EXERCISE, AND CONSEQUENT INCREASE OF FAITH.

JOB XXIII. 10. ZECHARIAH XIII. 9.

IT is said, the trial of faith is “*much more precious than gold.*”* Let us remember this under our sharpest exercises; and pray mightily for grace to abide the fiery trial, whatever it may be. Let us cleave to the loving hand that smites us, and say, “*Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.*”† Oh, if He may but get the smallest portion of honour and glory to His blessed name through our afflictions, sure they will prove our greatest blessings! For a poor sinful worm to be thought worthy to yield him any glory, should make us not only willing to bear, but, like the apostle, to *take pleasure* in what we suffer. This must be the work of grace; for which let us pray without ceasing. And since an eternity of happiness will cause us, as soon as we enter upon it, to forget all our sorrow, we ought (oh that we were able!) to “*count it all joy,*”

* 1 Peter i. 7.

† Job xiii, 15.

to endure trials. I am very well persuaded that human nature is clamorous for comfort, more than for grace. Even in the divine life, our cry is for *comfort*, for *consolation*: and though we ought to desire it, and pray for it, because it is promised that we shall not only have peace but *joy* in believing; yet I fear, if I may speak from my own experience, that the desire is not so pure and unmixed as we are ready to believe; *nature* puts in her claim, as well as *grace*. Could we, both in spiritual and temporal bestowments submit to whatever denials our Heavenly Father sees best for us, we should know more of that heavenly principle, that says in all things, "Thy will be done!" If the Captain of our salvation was made *perfect through sufferings*, who had no dross to purge away, shall not we lay our account for the same, who have little else but dross? What says the prophet, after speaking of affliction? "*And this is all the fruit to take away his sin.*"* It may be to the inexpressible loss of some that afflictions are withheld; while I doubt not that they would be to our inexpressible gain, had we more faith to enter into their full design. I am ashamed at myself; at my groans and my cries under my burdens. Alas! how weak is nature! how averse to suffering! how unwilling to engage in the warfare, which, if well fought, shall end in victory! We are apt to look for this or the other trial to be *lightened* or *removed*; whereas, were we true soldiers, we should expect still further combats from every quarter; and rejoice in every fresh occasion to shew our allegiance, our love—to our Captain. These things are very easy in theory; and I am sure they should be reduced to practice. But nothing less than the mighty

* Isaiah xxvii. 9.

power of God can effect this. As soon as faith ebbs, then I begin to cast about, and look here and there, to see what can be done ; till, perplexed and weary, I am driven back to transact with God. Let us look more to Him, and less to ourselves. *Commit thy way unto the Lord*, i. e. leave it to him, and he shall bring it to pass without any help of ours.*

The Lord will *try* faith. We often mistake in this point, are astonished that we should meet with many things so trying, so galling, so mortifying, so killing. But through much tribulation we must go—no cross, no crown. Trial proves faith in three ways : it tries whether it is faith—it purifies, it strengthens it. If bitter, it is for our profit, our benefit. Let the Lord lead you and me by a pleasant easy way, and we shall not know, all the way home, whether we have faith or not. I will say there is nothing can prove it to the Christian, but when he is brought into trials and difficulties ; when he can trust his God in the dark, bow with sweet submission under the most trying stroke, and say, “ Righteous art thou, O Lord, and true are thy judgments ; ” if he can trust Him when He seems to deny all that can gratify, and to give him as little as possible—then to rest in God, and cleave to Him ; and when other things are removed, to come out and lean upon God, this shows faith. Again, trial *purifies* our faith. If you judge of your faith, as I do of mine, you will say that there is a great deal of dross that wants removing ; then God comes down to purify it. Gold, though precious, is mixed with a great deal of dross. The goldsmith does not put it into the fire to lose his gold ; no, not

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, page 395.

a grain of it; but to purify it. God will take away those things which you have most delighted in, which have been a kind of little heaven to you, till he has brought you to say, ‘Now I have none but God.’ Trials are like high winds, which strengthen the trees by making them take deeper root.

The oak strikes deeper as its roots
By furious blasts are driven.

So the more winds, and the more severe the winds, which blow upon the Christian, the deeper he strikes root, the more he cleaves to the Rock.*

The Lord also tries, in order to purify our faith. It is the work of faith to bring the soul to live entirely upon Christ. I say entirely: you want to have the world under one arm and Christ under the other, and so go through the wilderness leaning upon both. The Lord will take away the world. Does he not say, “Son, give me thine heart,” not something of it, but the whole? The Christian seems to be willing, but the world gets between him and his God. Oh, how the eyes of his senses are caught by the glare of this world! He cannot see God clearly. God grows jealous. He lays the hand of vengeance upon that which takes the affections of the soul from him—the soul which he bought with his own blood. Do you not, dear brethren, find a sad mixture in your soul, even though you may have been long in the school of Christ? Faith and unbelief; heavenly affections and worldly affections; dependence on Jesus for happiness, and dependence on the world also? Now God will not bear this kind of conduct. He must

* Jones’ “Basket of Fragments,” page 118.

have the *whole* heart. He made the whole, and he bought the whole, and he will not be satisfied till he has the whole.

He will also try your faith, in order to strengthen it. Oh, when we hear this, and feel the weakness of our faith, we are ready to send up our petition, and say, ‘Lord, plunge me in a gulf of trials, if it would be for the strengthening of my faith.’ Trees, by being shaken, strike deeper roots, and become steadier. Sailors by the storm learn to be more skilful in managing the vessel. Warriors by battle learn better how to use their arms. So the Christian, in storms and in the field of battle, learns what he could not learn elsewhere. The labourer by exercising his limbs has the better use of them. So also the Christian learns to be active for God.*

That short petition, “*Lord, increase our faith!*” seems to contain all we want; but there is a wonderful propensity in fallen man to desire to rise by some other way than the simplicity of faith. Jesus knows how to support his children, and none are more abundant in thanksgiving and praise than those who drink of the bitter cup. Is it not wonderful that we who know his name should ever feel his providential dispensations? ‘He cannot deny himself.’ *Good* is written upon all we receive from Him; but not being written according to our language we cannot read it. Oh, for confidence, unbounded confidence! The means of increasing our faith are often to us dark and mysterious. But let us remember we are in a dark world, and must feel our way as we go on; for often we cannot see one step before us.

* Jones’ “Basket of Fragments,” page 260.

It is surely worth while to suffer, to prove what is the glory of the inheritance of the saints; which glory is wonderfully manifested in the dark days of affliction. God's children who are made *vessels of honour*, are often *chosen in the furnace of affliction*, to shew to the world what is good and most desirable even in this life. When we take a prospect of good things for ourselves or our children, we are apt to look into the world's index, and read, Health, riches, large houses, servants, tender connexions, good husbands, wives, children, and many other such like comforts. But when we look at the afflicted servants of God, which are monuments erected to his honour, we must turn our eyes away from this fair catalogue, and with the eye of faith take a survey of the believer's inventory. We must direct our view to how much there is of God in the soul. One would wish that all the world should know what God giveth to his children; and devoutly desire that all of us who bear his name might be more transformed into the divine image. 'God teaches his children to, indulge immense expectations, and to realize them in the meanest condition. There is no night too dark for a believer to raise his hopes to the brightest prospects.'*

When we have reached the blessed seat of immortality, the city of the living God, we shall remember no more the anguish we suffered in this life! †

I imagine it is a very common idea with young Christians, that there will arrive a period in the Christian journey, when, like Pilgrim, they shall find a pleasant arbour of rest to sit down in; and when

* Cecil.

† Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, page 216.

they shall so far have overcome sin and Satan, as to be allowed a little respite from the heat of battle. But as far as my own experience goes, and from all I can observe and learn from old Christians, this seems not to be the case. With very few exceptions, trials and exercises of faith rather increase than diminish in advanced age. This may appear a discouraging view, till we look at it with the eye of faith ; and then we see many reasons why it should be so. First, God is most glorified when his children cheerfully sustain tribulation. His power, truth, and love can only be truly manifested by the powerful support he gives under trouble, when the fruits of the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit are thus made to be read and known of all men. It is also by trial after trial, that we are brought to the discovery of our deep depravity and utter helplessness, and are made feelingly to cry out, with Job, "*Behold, I am vile!*" and with the prophet, "*Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips.*" By trouble the Holy Spirit trains us in the school of faith ; teaching us that which is a hard lesson to proud human nature, that all our wisdom, strength, and righteousness, is treasured up in Christ, from whom we must receive power to think even one thought that is good ; and to whom we must go, for the continual supply of every want, and the relief of every sorrow and burden. Our blessed Lord left us a legacy, "*My peace I give unto you,*" to which is annexed that which is ready to make us shrink ; for he adds, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation.*" I have often compared myself to a pursued bird, that lights first on one branch of a tree, and then on another, something still disturbs, affrights, or molests it ; and after many fruit-

less attempts to settle or to rest, the poor thing at length flies quite away, and we see it no more. In our Christian journey there are many spots where we make an attempt to rest; sometimes it is in some favoured manifestation of the divine love and presence, at which seasons we are ready to say, *My mountain stands so strong I shall never be moved.* My enemies are slain and will annoy me no more; my feet are delivered from the snare of the fowler, and I shall never more be thus entangled. Sometimes we are peculiarly blessed with the ordinances, both public and private, and sometimes the heart is cheered by the cordial of Christian friendship. Many other spots might be enumerated, on which we alight, and begin to plume our wings, but we are soon made to feel our mistake; and in every disappointment we are reminded of the Lord's words, "*In me ye shall have peace,*" not in any rich experiences or favoured moments, not in any ordinances or creature helps, further than as they lead you (as if our Lord had said) simply to *Me*, the only centre of peace and rest. Now when we are driven, like the poor bird, off every branch and sprig of nature's tree, and fly, from good self, and bad self, to Christ, for shelter and for rest, then have we reason for great thankfulness, let the cost of such teaching be ever so great.*

..... How kind of God to *try our faith*; we talk of the promises, but how different to make use of them! how difficult to take him at his word without an evidence: how merciful to be so let into the secrets of his love that he does not suffer us to walk

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, page 296.

smoothly down the stream of time, but sends large and rough billows to dash us on the promises ; sweetens our bitterness, and embitters our sweets. This should be the Christian's elevation, to *walk on the promises*. The more we are forced to prove them, the more highly favoured, because our ideas of things are not according to this world.

..... Till tried, we know not how little faith we have. Faith must be put in the scales with something very near our hearts—yes, with what is *nearest*, for it must still be “*more than these*.” The furnace must be heated in proportion to the increase of our faith. Is it because God willingly afflicts ? No, but the trial of faith strengthens; faith consumes its dross. The trial is precious to God, more precious than gold, because it shall endure. It is his riches, his treasure—precious to him is it to have proof from his child—“ Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” Is not every painful providence a messenger direct from the throne to our hearts—a ministering spirit sent forth to the heirs of salvation ? It brings this message—Now I will put home the question in a way that shall be felt. Are we ready to say, I could have borne any thing but this ? Then let us remember that the greatest kindness God can do us, is to heat the furnace to the utmost. He is in fact then saying, “ *Great is thy faith.*” Little furnaces are for little faith, and is not trial valuable, even to earthly affection ?

Do we not seize every opportunity to give proof to expressions of love ? Oh ! let us count the cost when we say, we believe. It is a word of deep meaning in the dictionary of God. Paul's belief was ready to *do*, but what was the answer, “ Thou shalt see what great

things thou shalt *suffer* for my Name's sake." It has been so from the beginning. We would not be without that trial of which all the church have been partakers. We would not that he should be so indifferent to our love, as never to question us about it, or desire an evidence of it. Does he not ponder each? He takes all into consideration. What would be felt in one, would not in another. Nevertheless, while it *must* be felt, he pledges his faithfulness, that with each temptation he will make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. He will never try us above what we are able to bear. Though it may seem that we are shut up on every side, he knows how to deliver! What a trial to Isaiah, when sent to tell the people of Israel that their hearts should be made fat, their ears heavy, and their eyes shut, lest they should be converted and healed! What a trial to Abraham, to go out of his country, and from his kindred, and come into a strange land, not knowing whither he went! What a trial to Noah to be mocked and regarded as a fool while building the ark, according to the command of the Lord! How Isaac's faith was proved in Jacob; how Jacob's in Joseph; how Moses' was in choosing rather to suffer affliction, esteeming the reproach of Christ great riches. When we seek to place ourselves in the condition of each of these sufferers, and consider every accompanying feeling, how it makes our trials say to us, O ye of little faith! Gideon! Barak! Samson! Jephtha! David! Samuel! Yet out of weakness were they made strong! Words quickly said, but what suffering!—in "mockings, scourgings, bonds, stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, wandered about in sheep's skins and goats'

skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented!" Truly, "of whom the world was not worthy." Oh! what meagre Christians! Should we draw back, if such are our prospects? May he not say, Where is your faith! Let us love the prospect, clasp it to our bosom, as a token of his love. When standing as we expect, among the great multitude escaped out of great tribulation, would we be found alone without this family peculiarity? Does it not distinctly pronounce that name which includes all blessedness—"my son."

When Abraham shall tell of his Isaac; Isaac of his Jacob; Jacob of his Joseph; David of his Absalom; Jeremiah of his dungeon; Peter of his stripes; John of his banishment; Paul of his perils, weariness, watchings, hunger, his thorn in the flesh, his buffeting of Satan,—shall we be content to have nothing to bring forward to his praise, and honour, and glory? for it shall not be forgotten, God is not unrighteous to forget our love for him.

..... Let us then, dear brother, welcome every trial. In them we shall prove our God. How full of compassion his approaches at such seasons! He comes with all the tenderness of one who knew that he was about to wound a heart beloved. Have you ever marked his gentleness, when bringing a painful message? How he usually calls by name, Abraham, Abraham—Moses, Moses. He tells us why he has called us by name, "because ye are mine;" his own sheep "he calls by name;" as many as he loves he rebukes, but he would have us understand it to be a rebuke of love.

We may rest assured, that the day is coming when the bitterest darkness shall be to us the sweetest. Every trial of faith in Heb. xi. was some affliction.

Let us accept tribulation as the boon we are most unworthy of. If we are without tribulation, of which *all* are partakers, then are we not children. Rather let us bless him. Oh, let us bless him indeed, that he has not pronounced that which would be the desert of our rebellious hearts,—“ Let them alone.” *

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Wave after wave, trouble after trouble—no ceasing till we get into the haven. I do not wish you out of them, but to profit by them. The furnace is to refine gold; so faith is proved and improved, yea, perfected by trials. Mind what the great Refiner says,† “I will bring the third part through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and I will try them as gold is tried.” “They shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God!” Oh, blessed furnace! What! is this the effect of being put into it? Does the Son of God appear with and for his suffering members? Does he keep off the evil of suffering, give patience under, profit from it? deaden the life of sense, quicken the life of faith, and thus bring more real good to his people from their trials than from all the comforts that ever they had? Say it is a great, an uncommonly great trial, the furnace is heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated; still, this is not to destroy faith, but to refine and exalt it. The plain lesson from hence to be learnt is, we must trust more to the Lord and less to self. His strength must be our safety, and not our weakness; his blessing must be our happiness. I

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters, p. 196.

† Zech. xiii. 8, 9.

write these things because I am praying for them. I am very certain you must carry your cross all the way through this valley of Baca. And what can I wish you better, than that you may find the rain filling the pools, and you may go from strength to strength.

The furnace is intended, in the Father's hand, to prove faith and to improve it. He puts it into the fire like gold, that upon trial, it may appear sterling, and that losing nothing but dross, we may learn to trust him better.*

* Romaine's Letters.

CHAPTER III.

AFFLICTION, IT IS FOR THE FULLER DEVELOPEMENT OF THE GRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

AFFLICTION is recommended to the believer as a means of calling into existence, and keeping in exercise, some of the loveliest graces, the finest features of the Christian character, those which most closely conform it to the character of Christ.

Were it not for affliction, what opportunity would be afforded for the display of those graces which so pre-eminently bear the impress of the Saviour's image—patience, with its lamb-like meekness silent amidst its sufferings—fortitude, with its lion-like courage, despising every danger in the cause of God—resolution, with heaven-derived strength, buffeting the roughest billows of opposition, and riding buoyant on persecution's wildest waves—submission, bowing its head with cheerful willingness to receive the burthen of sorrow which the divine wisdom sees fit to impose—and resignation, taking the cup of trial from a Father's hands, with a thankful smile exclaiming, as it takes the draught, “*The cup which my Father*

hath given me, shall I not drink it?" How, but for affliction, could these graces of the Spirit be developed, and how without these could we know that we had the Spirit of Christ?

If we met with no vexatious annoyances, no irritating provocations, how could we know whether we had put on the meekness and gentleness of Christ? If we encountered no serious injuries or aggravated insults, how could we tell whether we had put on the placability and forgivingness of Christ? If never disappointed in those we loved, or deceived by those we trusted, what sympathy could we have with the spirit of him of whom it is recorded, in the touching story of his sorrows, that in the hour of his greatest danger and distress, all his beloved and trusted friends—*all forsook him and fled?*

If no prayer of agonizing supplication for supporting strength were ever wrung from us, in the bleeding anguish of our souls, while shrinking from the anticipated approach of some tremendous trial, how little could we understand the feelings, or sympathize with the sufferings of him who, *being in an agony, prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* In a word, were we strangers to sorrow, and ignorant of grief, what fellowship could we have with the Man of Sorrows; with him who, all his life long, was so intimately acquainted with grief! And would we even wish, were the choice allowed us, to be so unlike the Saviour whom we love? to be shut out from all communion with him in his sufferings—to be incapacitated for participating in the spirit of his patience and resignation?

Did not he, when he travelled on earth to accom-

plish our redemption, go on his way weeping? And can we shrink back from following him in a path, consecrated, as it were, by the print of his footsteps and the trace of his tears?

And what has been the privileged portion of all his beloved people in every age? Has it not been a fellowship in suffering, a sympathy in sorrow with their divine Master, Forerunner and Friend?

When St. John beheld in the Apocalyptic vision the great multitude before the throne, clothed in white robes, and wearing on their heads resplendent crowns, and waving in their hands the emblem of their glorious victory, and when he asked the angel who these crowned conquerors were, and whence came they, what was the answer of the angel? Was it not one that should make the believer, I had almost said covetous of peculiar trials—ambitious of pre-eminent afflictions? *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb?*

Can we, with such a passage before us, expect or even desire that a new way to the celestial mansions should be marked out for us—a way in which neither Jesus nor any of his people have ever trod; and that God should reverse, specially and exclusively in our case, the sentence which declares, that believers must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven? Who are we, that God should thus work a new thing in the earth on our behalf?

Look again at affliction as a salutary school of discipline for the soul, a school of divine institution for teaching holiness, and training up the children of God for their inheritance in heaven.

Is it not in the school of affliction they have learned

to estimate aright the comparative value of the *creature and the Creator?* of the life of sense and the life of faith ; of the things of time and the things of eternity ?

What eminent servants of God have not been great proficients in this school ? Look at the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs. Look at the list of worthies recorded in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. In what school did God train them for his service on earth and his presence in heaven ? Let the 36th, 37th, and 38th verses answer the question. Look at St. Paul, the most devoted of servants, the holiest of saints, what was the experience of this highly-favoured follower of Christ ? He has sketched it for us in the substance of a single sentence, *In sufferings above measure, in deaths oft.* Yea look at the Lord of prophets and apostles, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Did he, *though a Son, learn obedience by the things which he suffered?** and shall we complain if we are taught in the same school ?

Was he made perfect through sufferings ? † and shall we think it hard to be perfected by the same process ? Shall we be dissatisfied if the Eternal Father treats us even as he treated his well-beloved Son ? Should we not rather rejoice in this identity of experience—this sameness of discipline with the Son of God ? Should not the servants rejoice to be treated as their Master, and the disciples to be dealt with as their Lord ? More especially when we remember that if we suffer with Christ,‡ suffer in his spirit, and above all, if we suffer for Christ, suffer in his cause—we shall also reign with him ;—that in proportion as

* Heb. v. 8.

† Heb. xi. 10.

‡ 2 Tim. xi. 12.

we have been partakers in his humiliation, we shall be partakers in his glory too. And who would not cheerfully carry the heaviest cross that ever was borne by mortal man on earth, when he remembers that through the exceeding riches of divine grace, the heavier has been his cross, the brighter will be his crown ? and that the stones on which the blows of the hammer fall thickest and heaviest, are designed for especial honour, prepared by the heavenly Architect, as polished corner-stones in his spiritual temple.*

* Hugh White's Meditations, p. 299.



PART II.

E CHRISTIAN'S CONDUCT UNDER AFFLICTION.

LOOKS NOT TO SECOND CAUSES, BUT SAYS "IT IS THE LORD."

DEAVOURS TO GLORIFY GOD, BY EXERCISING A CHEERFUL
SSION AND JOYFUL ACQUIESCENCE IN THE DIVINE WILL.

EJOICES IN HAVING FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS BELOVED
MASTER IN SUFFERING.

WAITS PATIENTLY THE LORD'S TIME FOR DELIVERANCE.

PART II.

CHRISTIAN'S CONDUCT UNDER AFFLCTION.

CHAPTER IV.

BOOKS NOT TO SECOND CAUSES, BUT SAYS,
‘IT IS THE LORD.’ 1 SAMUEL III. 18.

can be no more important subject of inquiry to a true believer, brought into the furnace of affliction, than the following: How ought I to act myself as a child of God? How can I glorify my Lord and Master? How can I most convincingly evidence to others, the truth of those things which I profess to believe?—the sustaining, consolatory character of the Christian faith; the efficacy of a Saviour’s love; the precious assurance of the presence of the Holy Ghost as a

Comforter. How can I most fully reap the benefit which my gracious Father has intended to convey by this affliction? How can I improve it to his glory and my own everlasting good?

These are surely solemn questions, and such as should fill the mind of every child of God, in the hour of sorrow and distress; the following extracts from the writings of some of God's tried and faithful servants, may perhaps assist the believer in his answer to these inquiries.

It has grieved me to hear Christians aggravate their trials, and debase their profession by looking back to this, and the other circumstance, dwelling upon that, as what gave rise to the whole affliction. 'O, if I had but had such advice—had I but thought! That I should consent my child should go to such a place! That I should not foresee! &c. And yet all the while the man believes God's purposes and decrees, and that he "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." How much beneath a Christian is this! Can you set aside the Divine counsels, or would you alter an ordered covenant?' Use the means, but repose upon God's power, wisdom, and faithfulness, who blesses or blasts them just as he pleases. To do otherwise is to make your burden a thousand times heavier than it is. "It is well"—that is the only reconciling principle under the severest trials, and even under lighter strokes, mere casualties as they appear to us, the soul can have no rest till he issues his concerns here. I have known little insignificancies very vexing and grieving; and the more so because one thinks how easily they might have been prevented. But the best way to quiet the soul is to

eye God's hand. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Psalm xxxix. 9.*

When death doth seize any of our friends, whether in the ordinary course of disease and decay, or by violence or accident, how consolatory to the mourning relatives is the thought, that it came at the bidding of the Saviour, and that it has not arrived without his sanction and appointment! Otherwise we might be apt to reflect with unavailing regret on certain needless exposures that might have been avoided; certain remedies whose virtues might have been tried; certain names high in professional reputation, who might have been consulted; or to dwell with painful self-reproach on certain accidents that might have been prevented, and injuries which timely care might have cured. The mind will often busy itself with such reflections after the loss of a near and dear friend; but the very intensity of feeling which is thus called forth, is a sufficient proof that any carelessness or negligence that may have been manifested, was far, very far, from being designed or wilful. And although, where criminal negligence has been shewn, no doctrine, however consolatory, can prevent regret, or should repress feelings of penitential sorrow, yet in other cases, where the heart bears witness to its own interest in the beloved object, the doctrine of Christ's absolute command over the keys of death, and the consideration that our friend was summoned away by a deliberate act of his sovereign wisdom, may well assuage the grief which such reflections on the commencement,

* Hill's "It is well," p. 78.

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progress, and treatment of the disease are wont to awaken in the most sensitive and affectionate minds.*

It is impossible to be submissive and religiously patient, if you suffer your thoughts to dwell among the confused rollings and wheels of second causes; as, O the place! O the time! O if this had not been, this had not followed! O the linking of this accident with this time and place! Look up to the Master Mover, and the First Cause; see and read the decree of the Creator of men, who appointeth death to his children, and the manner of it.†

. . . It is an unspeakable gift in such a world to be able to see any thing coming straight from him, without any second cause between; it would keep us very *patient*, thus to possess the soul; we know he has a design in all he does; the more grievous the dispensation, the more certainty of its need. What he does we know not now, but shall know hereafter.

His purposes are ripening fast,
Unfolding every hour.

Even in the consequences of sin, as in David's case, it is not said, the child fell sick, but the Lord struck the child, and it was very sick. The child of the man after God's own heart! he prayed, he entreated, yet was refused; yet he says, "Call on me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Yes, he shall deliver in his own way; and whatever be the way, in that thing we shall glorify him. "I wound and I heal."‡

* Buchanan's Comfort in Affliction, p. 152.

† Rutherford's Letters.

‡ Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

"I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible." Jer. xv. 21.

My soul! hast thou ever considered some of the many ways of softening trouble? Sit down, and learn it from this sweet scripture. Here is a general promise, which may be suited to particular circumstances, and such as will hold good in all. But first, remember that he who promiseth to deliver from the sorrow, is the same that appointeth the sorrow: "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." The Lord's rod hath a voice which *speaks* as well as *corrects*; and it is a mark of wisdom to *listen* as well as *feel*. Hence, if we mark the hand that appoints, we shall observe also all the other interesting particulars, both of the *instruments* by which the Lord works, the *time* and *place*, the *means* and *end*, and then discern love and grace, yea, Jesus himself in all. Suppose it be the world that crosses, or Satan that tempts, or false friends that oppose, or our mother's children that be angry with us; yet all are but the Lord's ministers; they're the sword, but the hand is the Lord's; and though they mean ill, he will bring good: if they even cast into prison, Jesus will be there. All things, and all means, and all times, shall, at his command, minister to his own purpose. If there be a storm *without*, Jesus hath chambers to take them into: if the affliction be *within*, Jesus can help them out. Yea, the very "earth shall help the woman," when the enemy casts forth a flood after her, to swallow her up. Be the storm what it may, Jesus is at the helm. Like Joseph's afflictions, they shall minister to good, and the end bring the proof, that

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the whole had the appointment in love. Hence, in soul, though the direction is short, it is very sweet. Never look at the trial without looking also at the Appointer. Never allow thyself to view the affliction without looking through it to One that stands behind regulating and moving all. It matters not in this case what the storm threatens, but what the Lord Jesus means; not what the instrument intends, but what Jesus hath appointed. And by thus looking to Christ, the greatest troubles will give thee but little concern.*

* Hawker's Evening Portion.

CHAPTER V.

HE ENDEAVOURS TO GLORIFY GOD.

"By exercising a cheerful submission and joyful acquiescence in the divine will." "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."—**I SAMUEL** III. 8.

"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will but thine be done."—**LUKE** XXII. 42. **JOB** I. 21; XIII. 15.

CHRISTIAN resignation is very different from that oical stubbornness, which is most easily practised by those unamiable characters whose regards centre wholly in self; nor could we in a proper manner exercise submission to the will of God under our trials, we did not feel them; he who knows our frame is pleased to allow that afflictions for the present are not joyous, but grievous. But to them that fear him, he is near at hand to support their spirits, to moderate their grief, and in the issue to sanctify it; so that they shall come out of the furnace refined and more humble and spiritual. There is a part however assigned us,—we are to pray for the help indeed, and we are not willingly to give way to the impression of overwhelming sorrow. We are to endeavour to turn our thoughts to such considerations as

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are suited to alleviate it ; our deserts as sinners ; the many mercies we are still indulged with ; the still greater afflictions which many of our fellow-creatures endure, and above all, the sufferings of Jesus, that Man of Sorrows, who made himself intimately acquainted with grief for our sakes. When the will of the Lord is manifested to us by the event, we are to look to him for grace and strength, and be still and know that he is God ; that he has a right to dispose of us and ours as he pleases, and that in the exercise of this right he is most certainly good and wise. We often complain of losses ; but the expression is rather improper. Strictly speaking, we can lose nothing, because we have no real property in any thing. Our earthly comforts are lent us, and when recalled we ought to return and resign them with thankfulness to him who has let them remain so long in our hands.

There is something fascinating in grief, painful as it is, we are prone to indulge it, and to brood over the thoughts and circumstances which are suited, like fuel to fire, to heighten and prolong it. When the Lord afflicts, it is his design that we should grieve ; but in this as in all other things, there is a certain moderation which becomes a Christian, and which only grace can teach ; and grace teaches us not by books or by hearsay, but by experimental lessons ; all beyond this should be avoided and guarded against as sinful and hurtful.*

Learn to believe that Christ is better than his strokes, himself and his promises better than his

* Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 26.

frowns ; *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.* Hence I infer that losses, crosses, disappointments, ill-tongues, loss of friends, relations, houses, or country, are God's workmen, set to work out good to you out of every thing that be-falleth you. Let not the Lord's dealing seem harsh, rough, or unfatherly, because it is unpleasant ; when the Lord's blessed will blows across your desires, it is best in humility to strike sail to him, and be willing to be led any way our Lord pleaseth. It is a point of denial to yourself to be as though you had not a will, but had a free disposition of it to God ; and to make use of his will for your own is both true holiness, and your ease and peace ; you know not what the Lord is working out of this, but you shall know it hereafter.*

What is submission to the will of God? Submission quiets under affliction, but it does not take away our sense and feeling of the affliction. The apostle speaks what is every believer's experience : " No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Heb. xii. 11.

Unless we realize our trials, and account them trials indeed ; what are we the better for them ? This would be to despise the chastening of the Lord, to be above correction ; to be smitten and not to grieve, is one of God's sorest judgments, and always argues a soul ripe for ruin.†

Self-denial, submission of our will to our adverse circumstances, taking up the most irksome cross ;

* Rutherford's Letters.

† Hill's "It is Well," p. 9.

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compliance with ten thousand arduous claims and demands ; and all this in a spirit of kindness and cheerfulness—are lessons only to be obtained in the combat, through the aid of divine grace. It is not only our faith that must be tried ; but our love, our patience, our submission, resignation and humility—all these must be brought forth by the purifying fire. But one thing you must constantly bear in mind, or you will faint in the day of adversity ; namely that you are not called to undertake one single difficulty in your own strength. Good resolutions, the finest and most correct views, will all fail, unless you go simply as a child to the Strong for strength, and lean on all-sufficient grace.*

There are two lessons which tribulations teach us; first, the nature of the world through which we travel. When the world smiles we are apt to make great mistakes—to take it for a friend—to make an idol of it, troubles shew us what it is. Secondly, we learn how precious Christ is when other joys forsake us, we see how little the world can do for us, and our great need of Jesus : these trials would weigh us down if it were not for faith : *I had fainted unless I had believed.*

Nature and faith are two different principles ; every man carries his glass with him. The natural man has one ; the Christian two. The natural man looks through nature's glass, and sinks in the day of tribulation. The Christian has two glasses—nature and faith—but he too often looks through nature's, and the effects are the same as with the natural man.

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 308.

But when he uses the other glass—and looks at Mount Zion—the new Jerusalem, he surmounts all difficulties, overcomes the world, rejoices in the dark vale. Looking through nature's glass, when miseries come, the soul says, all these things are my loss, my injury, &c., but faith sees the hand of God measuring it out with the greatest exactness; more careful in weighing out trials, than any man is in weighing out the most precarious medicine. Nature says, all is against me; faith says, all is working together for my good. The real Christian is often ready to faint, not only the men who have nothing better than the world to lose, (we do not wonder at them) but men who have a God, a kingdom, a throne in store; even these are ready to faint. They have the same frail nature and infirmities; even David, that man after God's own heart, who exceeded all the men of his day in piety: he seems to say, Let me tell you, brethren, I should have fainted—nature was quite sinking, had it not been for the glass of faith, through which I saw that these afflictions are light, and but for a moment. Then, I could say, welcome tribulation, welcome distress, I shall see the goodness of the Lord.*

We see a Christian in his best light and in his sweetest frame, when he is enabled to exercise a spirit of resignation. It is not always thus with the child of God; there is nature as well as grace in the best of saints; flesh as well as spirit; strong corruptions as well as strong faith and hope; wherefore strength must be communicated from God, or else, even under lesser trials, there will be no firm trust in

* Jones's "Beaker of Fragments," p. 96.

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him. Patience is not a mere endurance of trouble, but it is the exercise of those graces which are suited to a suffering state. To believe God, to love him, to delight in him, to resign ourselves to his sovereign will and pleasure, and from a settled estimate of things eternal, above all that this present life promises or can give, to have the soul quiet and composed, cheerful and dependent, even under the frowns and rebukes of Providence, keeping fast hold of the promise, the covenant of God—this is the faith, this is the patience of the saints.*

To be pleased with God as a friend, when he seems to be coming forth as an enemy: to lean upon a promise, when all the ways leading to the performance of that promise are shut up; to rejoice in God when we have nothing left beside to rejoice in, and faith is hard put to it, to call God ours: thus to cleave to God when we do not find comfort from him,—this is believing indeed; to love the hand *that smites*, that is true grace and great grace.

Oh, to feel the will of God a soft pillow!—as a Christian friend once told me she did, this would bring a peace into the soul, that passeth all understanding, and make all sufferings comparatively light and easy.†

The manner of our receiving chastisement will throw great light upon our character, whether we are or are not the sons of God. Sorrow is a fire; but while it is purifying to some, it is a consuming fire to others. The primitive Christians were remarkable

* Hill's "It is Well."

† Ibid. p. 23.

for their patience under suffering. God can make a man as quiet by faith as if there were no danger at all; but a frown from God is ten thousand times worse than a stake or a gibbet.*

In affliction be careful not to go over your troubles alone. It is very hurtful to look on trouble, but as you look on God in Christ at the same time. Peter took his eye off Christ and looked at the waters, and immediately he began to sink.

To be under trouble, and to know how to act under trouble is a distinct thing. Christ teaches us how to receive the cup of suffering; he says, *Learn of me*; see how I took a cup more bitter than you can have; I was to drink it in darkness, and under my Father's frown. Every Christian may tell to God his tale of woe, which no ear besides may hear. The most severe sufferings often arise from causes which cannot be told, even to the nearest friend: interior, deep, inexorable. But this should suffice—I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction, (i.e. made thee a choice one) I have placed thee there, and refined thee in it.

It is one thing to be in the furnace, and another thing to be *made choice*. The Christian character is fixed by many humbling dispensations; if he be gold, he must be tried in the fire; if he have a heart of stone, there must be a hammer to break it. There are special lessons to be taught in the furnace; we are to be brought to a right view of ourselves as condemned criminals—to see the vanity of the world, and to feel its insufficiency, to perceive that all is a snare; and that the very things we are allowed to

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 160, Cecil's Sermons.

love we may love too much, and put them in the place of God.*

How often does the extraordinary and mysterious providence of God say to our wondering perplexities, under trial and sorrow, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways!" And how strengthening and delightful is it to the painfully exercised Christian, when, his faith being strong, he can from the heart say "*It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good!*" and, blessed be God, this grace has made me *as a weaned child, as a child weaned of his mother!* Alas! so backward is our wretched nature to learn this high lesson of entire resignation, that few of God's dearest children have reason to be satisfied as to their attainments therein. If in our time of trial we seem to have learned it, another occasion will soon arrive to shew, and make us feel that we have a *will* and a *choice* of our own, which is not yet brought into subjection; while we yet know that in proportion as we are enabled to say "*Thy will and not mine be done,*" our peace and comfort abound in the most trying circumstances. Blessed is he who hath said "*My grace is sufficient for thee:*" sufficient to fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith, with power sufficient to uphold us in all the changing conflicts and combats with our spiritual enemies—and to make us more than conquerors over every opposing force.†

"Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."
Matt. xi. 26.

* Extract from Cecil : Mrs. Hawkes, p. 189.
† Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 411.

"Father! not my will, but thine be done." Luke xxii. 42.

That the cup of affliction is unpalatable to human nature, even when most fully renewed by divine grace, is a truth confirmed by the experience of the holiest of the children of God in every age. And that it is not expected by him who knows our frame that it should be otherwise than distasteful, is manifest from the declaration of the apostle, who certainly made as light of the heaviest weight of affliction as it is within the reach of the most exalted Christian, while on earth, to do; and yet declares that *no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.* This is proved yet more abundantly by the example of that divine Redeemer, who took on him human nature, unsullied with spot or stain, or blemish of sin; and yet who manifested, on the approach of his mysterious conflict with inconceivable agonies, all that natural shrinking from intense suffering—all that sinless desire to escape, if possible, from the endurance of overwhelming anguish, which, however in him blended with the most unqualified and unhesitating submission to his heavenly Father's will, yet proved, in the most incontestable manner, that the Redeemer's incarnation was not a shadowy representation, but a real and substantial assumption of humanity, whereby he became so altogether identified with us, in the participation of all the essential attributes, and even of all the innocent infirmities of our nature, as to be in truth very man—"bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh." Since, then, even in him in whom human nature was exhibited in sinless purity and perfection, the highest conceivable degree of resignation to the divine will was altogether compatible

with the experience of intensest anguish in the prospect of approaching sufferings, and a deep-felt and prayerfully expressed desire to escape from those sufferings, if it could be done consistently with his heavenly Father's will and glory ; surely we cannot expect that in this, more than in any other particular, the servant shall be above his master, or the disciple greater than his Lord. Surely *we* cannot be expected not to shrink from the approach, or not to be agonized in the endurance of overwhelming sufferings, if even the Son of God, in the moment of sublimest devotion to his Father's glory and sweetest submission to his Father's will, felt and manifested in his hour of agony, such a tremendous perturbation of spirit, and poured out his soul in such intense fervour of supplication that, if possible, that cup might pass away from him.

True, most true, that if all the sufferings which have been endured by human hearts, from the hour when sin first brought sorrow upon earth, up to the present, could be all heaped together into one congregated mass, the enormous load would be lighter than a feather, compared with that mountainous weight of woe—the whole burden of the imputed guilt of a lost world, with the whole weight of the Father's righteous wrath against that world—which was then laid on the self-devoted head of God's beloved Son, and at last crushed him, Almighty as he was, crushed *even him* to death.

But though as unapproachable in the depth of his agony as in the height of his glory, the Son of God had to tread the wine-press of the Father's wrath alone ; though in his sufferings there was not only an infinite pre-eminence over all other sufferers that

ever trod our earth, but such a peculiarity of woe as to entitle him, not merely emphatically, but, I might say, exclusively, to the affecting appellation of the "Man of Sorrows," still are we privileged to draw from the narrative of his mysterious agony in the garden, the consolatory conclusion, that it is not sinful in itself to shrink from suffering—that human nature, necessarily as such, by the appointment of its divine Author, dreads and desires to escape from the endurance of overwhelming anguish ; for even when taken into union with the divine, it felt and displayed this desire and this dread. And therefore if on other grounds we have scriptural warrant to hope that we are children of God, we need not fear that our claim to the title is invalidated, because in the prospect of some tremendous trial (from which with bleeding heart and shuddering soul we shrink back) we pray, like the Redeemer, "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ;*" provided also we add, like the Redeemer, "*Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.*"

In truth, it is not the sullen pride of stoical apathy, but the patient meekness of Christian resignation, which God requires from his children, under the chastenings of his Fatherly hand. He does not expect (for "he knoweth whereof we are made, he remembereth that we are but dust.") that when he is obliged by the very faithfulness of his love to inflict on us some agonizing operation, indispensable for the preservation of our spiritual life, the weak flesh should not grieve, or the lacerated heart bleed, when he is cutting perhaps even to that heart's inmost core. Oh, no ; but he *does* expect, and he has a right to do so, that we should submit to the operation, however

56 CHRISTIAN CONDUCT UNDER AFFLICITION.

agonizing, with such cheerful resignation, such an uncomplaining endurance of the pain he is compelled, by his very love to our souls, to inflict, as will testify to himself and all around, that we remember that the knife is in the hands of a tender Father; and feel sweetly assured that he will not cut deeper, or make the operation in the smallest degree more painful, than he knows to be indispensable for accomplishing our spiritual cure. Let us then only not repine, and our gracious God does not forbid us to weep, when his own chastening hand has thrown open the flood-gates of sorrow in our souls.

So far from this, he rather encourages us to weep, even as Jesus wept; for, in the overflowing compassion of his divine nature, he has provided tears as the suitable language and soothing lenitive of grief. And if in mistaken submission or murmuring sullenness, we refuse to shed them, not only will the silent and smothered sorrow which finds no relief in tears, far more heavily press down, and more consumingly prey upon the bruised and breaking heart, but we shall (if I may so express myself) deprive our heavenly Father of the delight he feels in exercising towards his dear afflicted children one of the tenderest offices of his love. For were tearless sorrow alone to be indulged by his people, where were the opportunity for him to perform towards them that most gracious promise which exhibits the Father of all mercies and God of all comfort, under such an inexpressibly tender and endearing aspect—"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes?"

Could language convey a lovelier, a more touching representation of our heavenly Father's compassion towards his sorrowing children, than by thus exhi-

biting him, as with his own hand, gently wiping away their tears? And see we not by this most exquisite image, that if our sorrow be unmixed with repining, if the smile of cheerful resignation break through the tears of natural grief, he who delights to wipe away our tears, will assuredly not be displeased to see them flow.

We therefore contend that a recoiling reluctance to suffer is not in itself a sinful state of mind; and would protest against the wisdom or prudence of denying to the children of affliction that natural expression and indulgence of sorrow which, if not cherished in a rebellious spirit, or carried to an immoderate excess, we hold not to be blameable, but rather a gracious provision of our merciful Father for giving utterance and relief to feelings, which when pent up in imprisoned silence within the soul, are too often found to

‘Whisper the o’erfraught heart, and bid it break.’

We feel, at the same time, that it would be lowering the standard of a believer’s privileges, far indeed below that which is assigned to them in the gospel, did we not observe that, to a child of God, affliction is essentially changed in its nature and even aspect, by being inserted among the blessings of the well-ordered covenant of grace.

From an evil it is transmitted into a good; the touch of God’s hand has turned it into a blessing; better than gold, yea, more precious than much fine gold. Yes, and its very countenance is changed; for though, at first sight, to the eye of sense it may still look stern and repulsive, when the purified eye of faith examines its features more narrowly, they

begin to wear something of a sweet and heavenly expression, and a smile is seen passing over them, which tells the Christian mourner that the angel of affliction is indeed a messenger of mercy, sent to him on an errand of loving-kindness from his God. And though at first its voice sound harsh and terrifying, yet, when he listens to it awhile, it discourses so divinely of heaven and heavenly themes that he cannot but love to listen to its celestial converse: for he finds that the voice he so much feared at first is but like Joseph's, when he spoke roughly to his brethren, while all the time there was nothing but love towards them treasured up within his heart.

Perhaps then, one who has been no mere theorist in affliction, but has drunk long and deeply of its bitter cup of blessings, may be privileged, with stronger claims to a favourable hearing than one who could speak of it only from the hearing of the ear, to plead on behalf of affliction, as a divinely appointed messenger of love from God, whose visit ought to be welcomed by his children with cordial gratitude, and its affectionate admonition received with all the respect and devout attention, due to every message that comes direct from God.

I would observe then, that there are two considerations which are powerfully calculated to recommend, I might almost say endear, affliction to a child of God:

1. The consideration of the hand from which it comes.
2. The consideration of the blessings that follow in its train.

1. The consideration of the hand from which it comes. Surely there is abundant comfort to a Christian in the thought, that affliction *cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground,*

but comes from that hand from which he has received all his blessings—that hand which has guided and guarded him, with such ceaseless care, all his life long; that hand, which for his sake and his salvation, was stretched forth on Calvary, to bruise even to death his well-beloved Son.

And what can come to a grateful child of God from that hand, come in what shape it may, (if it come not in the shape of eternal wrath,) that should not be received with thankfulness, and acknowledged with praise?

But how should the feeling of grateful affection for the appointed visitation be deepened, when it is sent as a special token of our heavenly Father's love! And surely, according to the scriptural standard, the believer is privileged to look on affliction in this light—for is it not written (and, oh! how many almost broken hearts has that verse bound up!) *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.* Thus looking with the eye of faith through the dark dispensation, he is more than reconciled to all its afflicting results, when he sees that

Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

And looking forward to the blessed fruits of sanctified affliction, rejoicingly remembers, that those black clouds which have wrapt all his earthly prospects of happiness in the shadow of death, are yet

Big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings o'er his head.

It is this habit of viewing the hand of God as a loving Father's hand, appointing all these afflictions as tokens of his love, which has enabled his children

in every age, to bear their heaviest trials with submissive patience and cheerful—yea even thankful acquiescence in their heavenly Father's will. When Samuel had communicated to Eli the appalling intelligence of the approaching destruction of his family, what is the reflection that sustained the afflicted father's sinking heart, under such a tremendous stroke? Hear it from himself: *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.*

When David fled from his son Absalom, and the anguish of his bleeding heart, so deeply wounded by the ungrateful treachery of his favourite child, was cruelly aggravated by the insults of the cursing Shimei, what reconciled the agonized sufferer to this bitter aggravation of his before almost insupportable weight of woe? *Let him curse* (says the afflicted monarch), *because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David!* Let him alone, let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him!

He saw God's hand in the trial, and he was satisfied; and how sweet the consolatory hope which this view suggested to him. It may be that the Lord will look upon my affliction, and that the Lord will re-quite me good for his cursing this day.

We are never more likely to have our mourning turned into joy, and the garment of praise given us for the spirit of heaviness, than when we take our afflictions, through whatever channel they come, patiently as from God's hands, and are sweetly satisfied with whatever is done, because he does it. Again, look at Job, the greatest of sufferers, but One, that ever was upon earth. Messenger hurries in after messenger, to tell him that all his property and all his children were swept away. What was the re-

fection that reconciled him to the sudden bereavement of all to which he had ever looked for happiness on earth—all in one hour of unexpected desolation torn for ever from his eyes? *The Lord gave* (says the patient sufferer), and (mark, *not* as the messengers reported, the plunderers from the desert—not the wind from the wilderness—but) “*the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!*”

It was a sore trial to be made poor, and destitute, and childless; to have all his property, and all his sons and daughters—all taken at once in an hour: but “*the Lord hath taken away,*” that was enough for the pious patriarch. No murmur burst from his lips: but blessings, grateful blessings on the name of the Lord.

Oh, it was a glorious triumph of patience amidst extremest woe, and we see how it was accomplished (through divine grace) by faith fastening its steadfast gaze, in submissive thankfulness, on the hand of the Lord.

We know but of one greater sufferer than Job; and what is the example left us by the greatest of all sufferers that earth ever saw? What was the uniform language in which he breathed forth the spirit of patient resignation, amidst all the accumulated woes which continually pressed upon his afflicted soul? “*The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?* Even so, Father: for so it seemeth good in thy sight. “*O, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.*” Now it is by neglecting to follow the example thus set us by the saints of the Lord, and the Lord of saints himself, that under the pressure of severe affliction, our souls are so often cast down, and our

spirits disquieted within us ; and we indulge, if not in the language of fretfulness or repining, at least in the feeling of despondency or discontent. We look too exclusively at second causes, overlook the great First cause, who appoints and arranges all according to the counsel of His own will. We fasten our eye on the instruments employed to chastize us, and forget the hand which wields that instrumentality, only to effect the purposes of his everlasting love.

We are persecuted, reviled, reproached, and we foolishly and fretfully complain of such undeserved insults, because we do not remember, like David, that the Lord has permitted these persecutions and reproaches as trials of our faith.

Our property is taken from us ; and we indulge in peevish lamentations and complaints, over the unsuccessful speculation, the unexpected failure, the fraud, or the injustice, or the oppression, that has taken away our wealth, instead of saying, with the pious Job, "The Lord hath taken it away, blessed be the name of the Lord ! "

Our health breaks down perhaps, in the midst of our journey ; all our plans of usefulness are crossed ; all our prospects of enjoyment clouded ; days of pain and nights of sleeplessness are appointed unto us ; and we forget what abundant comfort that very thought should supply, that they are appointed unto us ; and by whom ? We do not sufficiently, with the afflicted Eli, remember and confess, *It is the Lord ! let him do what seemeth to him good.*

Or perhaps the sorest of earthly trials is allotted to us ; the desire of our eyes, the delight of our heart, has been taken from us. The grave has closed over the objects that were the loved companions and com-

forters of our earthly pilgrimage ; that used so gladly to rejoice with us when we did rejoice—so tenderly to weep with us when we wept ; and we feel a sickening sense of desolation come over us ; and are too prone, like the disconsolate mourner of old, to refuse to be comforted. And why is all this ? We allow ourselves to be absorbed in excessive sorrow for our withered gourds, because we dwell too deeply on the harrowing remembrance how we used to delight to rest under their shadow, and how as we rested there our fond heart seemed full of happiness, even to overflowing : and when these recollections rush over our spirits, we are ready to repine and complain, and even to feel angry, that our gourd is withered ; and we forget that we do not well to be angry for the gourd, because it was God who prepared the worm that withered it ; and surely we do not well to be angry with our God ! I speak not merely of the impiety but the ingratitude of such anger (and all immoderate and repining sorrow is such), since God sent the worm to wither our gourd, not in wrath, but in *love* ; not to leave our defenceless heads unsheltered from the scorching sun or blighting storm, but to lead us to abide in safer and sweeter confidence, under the everlasting shadow of his wings, who is to all his afflicted people amidst all their sorrows, *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. I know not of any habit of mind, that would have a stronger or more salutary influence to keep us quietly submissive and cheerfully resigned under our heaviest afflictions, than to habituate ourselves thus to view the hand of our covenant God, arranging them all for our eternal good. Then, even if our heavenly Father saw it needful for our eternal welfare to strip us, like

Job, of every earthly comfort, and make us like that man of unparalleled woes, a spectacle of mingled astonishment and pity to men and angels; still we could look up to heaven with a cheerful smile, and say, "Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight:" and oh, in thy mercy forbid, and by thy grace prevent, that what seemeth good in thy sight, should ever seem evil in mine.*

Weigh your sins and your mercies together before you look at any of your trials. Never think of your sufferings, but at the same time you think of your sins: afflictions will sit light where sin sits heavy.†

The danger to which the believer is exposed, under trial, of either *despising* the chastening of the Lord, or *fainting* when he is rebuked of him, is beautifully and forcibly described in the following extracts from a Sermon by the Rev. F. Goode, on Proverbs iii. 11, 12. *Despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction, &c.*

Here are obviously two extremes, in the conduct of men under affliction, against each of which we are cautioned.

1. What it is to *despise* the chastening of the Lord.

Now, the child of God may be said to *despise* chastening, when the visitation is suffered to come, and go again, without producing any peculiar humiliation, before the God who sends it. It has been, say, comparatively a *light one*, in the tender mercy of God: but, O, the wretchedness of the heart of man! The

* Hugh White's Meditations, p. 268.

† Hill's "It is Well."

very circumstance which should affect us with the divine goodness, and make us quick to listen, often hardens us into indifference ! We do not wish to think that God *means* rebuke by it, or has any *particular* voice in it, to our souls. Perhaps we dreaded the uplifted hand ; but it has fallen as a Father's, and we have thought no more of it. Again, we may be said to *despise* chastening, when we refuse to amend our way, and *forsake* the evils which God has been provoked to punish. . . . For a long time, it may be, the foolish soul stands out against God, *acknowledges* the sin, *smarts* for it, and yet *clings* to it, lets the chastisement go on, and had rather endure God's displeasure, than endure the pain of denying itself, in its evil ways.

My brethren, are any of you suffering, at this time, by the hand of God ? Possibly, in what has been said you recognize something of your own spirit and conduct. Some perhaps, like Pharaoh, are doing their utmost to rise *above* the pressure of God's judgments. They try to forget them, to *drown* their voice by a continual round of pleasure or business. This is a common recipe with the world, for such as are in affliction, ' You must try to amuse yourself. You must go into society. You must not allow yourself to dwell on gloomy thoughts about God and your souls. My brethren, if God *hate* you, he will let you listen to this advice, he will let you succeed in this attempt. . . . " My son despise not." A tender-hearted obedient child waits not for a Father's *rod*. He *minds a look*, catches the first hint of disapproval, and orders himself accordingly. It is your wisdom to do the same. I speak to some who are young in life ; at least in the *divine* life. They are not much

exercised in affliction. My brethren, if you want to escape God's *rod*, attend to his *whisper*. If that will but do his work in your soul, he has no pleasure in more. But if God love you, his work in you he *will* accomplish at any cost; and if you despise his chastening, he *will* send that on you which you *cannot* despise. Many a grief might his poor children be free from, if they would but be quick, to gather their Father's meaning from his *eye*.

'Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' This is the other extreme, which men are prone to run into, under God's correcting hand: one equally hurtful, equally sinful with the former; though I believe not so generally felt and acknowledged thus to be. But these two evils are in it—it equally robs us of the benefit of correction; and it equally dishonours God, though in a somewhat different way. Now, the child of God may be said to be *weary* of correction; when he is *impatient* under it; thinks he has endured it long enough, and sharp enough, (or even *more* than enough) already; far more than his brethren. Hence he is fretful and dissatisfied at the whole ordering of life, because of the bitterness that accompanies it; and indulges secret discontent, and hard thoughts of God, as if he took *pleasure* in punishing. . . .

The child of God is *weary* of correction when he allows himself to *brood over* his sorrows; makes the most of them; and refuses to see any thing of mercy in them, or along with them. Hence he is tempted to neglect the duties of his calling; sits down in sullen despondency, and refuses to be comforted. Turn, my brethren, to the third chapter of Lamentations, and there you will see the language of Zion's mourner, under the heaviest inflictions of God's cor-

recting hand. "I am the man," &c. verses 1—18. This is to be brought low indeed! But what! my brethren, is this *all* they have to say of God? Then, to be sure, it would be the very spirit we are reproving. This is language that, by itself, just suits a drooping, desponding soul. But mark; they have something *more* to say of God. "It is of the Lord's mercies," &c. verses 22, 39, 40, 41. O here is the high and holy carriage of a child of God, not *weary* of his correction. It may be sharp. It may call forth many a tear, many a groan, many an entreaty for deliverance. But withal, he will have to tell of the *mercies* of the Lord; mercy in visiting; mercy to temper the visitation. He will give glory to God, and confess that his sins have deserved judgment far exceeding what he has experienced. He will sweetly humble himself under God's mighty hand, and though the thorn be yet in the flesh, he will set about the duties of his calling, and trust to have that assurance made good in him, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Again, the child of God is *weary* of correction, when under it he refuses to *hope* in God; when he not only sits down and says, It could not be *worse* with me, but says also, it will never be *better*. This is a grievous fruit of the carnal mind under affliction. For what does such language amount to? It is in effect, nothing less than stripping God of his dearest attributes of love and mercy; at least "*limiting* the Holy One of Israel," as to its exercise. It says, He has no pity; or, Nothing he can do can heal me. In the 77th Psalm, you find one struggling with the same spirit, and at length, in the exercise of faith, obtaining a blessed victory. "Will the Lord cast off

for ever? and will he be favourable no more?" &c.
" And I said, *This is my infirmity*; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

O, my brethren, any of you that are sorely tried,—your souls poured out like water, under the rebukes of your God,—pray him for the same grace. Say, with a saint of old, " Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." " He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." Job xiii. 15; xxiii. 10. Or with another afflicted mourner, " why art thou cast down, O my soul," &c. Psalm xlvi. 11. Look again at that scripture already referred to, Lam. iii. 24—26, 31, 32. In all these instances you see faith in exercise, sweetly carrying the soul above its *present* experience, and enabling it to rest on God, while all is darkness and dismay, storm and tempest, around it.

To Jane Brown.

MISTRESS—Grace, mercy, and peace be to you. I am glad that you go on to follow Christ in this dark and cloudy time; it were good to sell all things for him; for when all these days are over, we shall find it our advantage that we have taken part with Christ. O how sweet a thing were it for us, to learn to make our burdens light, by framing our hearts to the burden, and making our Lord's will a law! And we have good cause to wait patiently, for ere it be long, our Master will be with us, and bring every thing to light: happy are they that are found watching; our sand-glass is not so long as to weary us in doing so; time will eat away and root out our woes and sorrow; our heaven is in the bud, and growing up to a harvest; why then should we not follow on, seeing our

span-length of time will come to an inch ? Therefore I command Christ to you as the staff of your old age : let him have now the rest of your days, and think not much of a storm upon the sea when Christ is in the ship.*

The Waters of Marah. Exod. xv. 23.

Pause now, my soul, and see what improving reflections thou canst gather from this history of the children of Israel at the waters of Marah. The Lord thy God hath brought *thee* out of spiritual Egypt, he hath led thee through a new and living way, even the red sea of Christ's blood, and thou hast begun thy song of salvation also to God and the Lamb. But when, like Israel, he is bringing thee through the wilderness, where dispensations suited to a wilderness may be supposed to abound, how art thou manifesting thy faith and submission ? Reader, what is your answer to such a question ? Methinks I would hope better things of *you* than I dare say of myself. But I too often find, when the waters of life are like the waters of Marah ; when what I proposed for my comfort turns out to my sorrow, and I discover a worm in the very bud of some sweet flower I have been rearing up for myself with great care ; I feel rebellion rising within. I blush even now in the recollection of how often I have been tempted to call in question the divine faithfulness, and, like Israel, have taken offence at some little difficulty I have met with, which afterwards I have discovered was purposely put there by the Lord himself, to manifest his watchfulness over me, and how sure my dependance

* S. Rutherford.

upon him might have been placed. Reader, doth your heart find but too much correspondence to this state of mine? Let us both then do as Israel did, when at any time our waters are like the waters of Marah: Cry unto the Lord. Let us put the cross of Jesus into the stream, be it what it may (for that is the tree which the Lord sheweth his people), and never doubt but Jesus's cross, though to him more bitter than gall, yet to us will prove the sweetener of all our crosses. Yes, thou, dear Lord! didst drink the cup of trembling even to the dregs, that in the view of it thy redeemed might take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. Thy cross, if cast into a sea of trouble, will alter the very properties of affliction to all thy tried ones. In every place and in every state, while my soul is enabled to keep thee in remembrance, and *thy wormwood and thy gall*, the wilderness of all my dispensations will smile, and blossom as the rose. I shall then learn to bless a taking God, as well as a giving God, for both alike are from the overflowing of thy mercy: and like the apostle, I shall then have learnt the blessedness of that state, "to glory in tribulation, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*

And now, children of God, what shall I urge on you as your first duty, on thus surveying the glorious inheritance reserved for you? Does not the apostle direct me in the words of the text, "Giving thanks unto the Father." Yes, surely you cannot come down from the mount, from which you have been taking a Pisgah view of the promised land where

* Hawker's "Evening Portion."

your inheritance lies, and catching even a glimpse of its glory, without lifting up a song of praise to that Father of all mercies, who before the foundation of the world prepared for you this inheritance ; who sent his own dear Son to earth to purchase it for you ; and has sent his Holy Spirit into your heart, to make you meet for its everlasting enjoyment. Indeed when you reflect that the Father's wholly unmerited love is the fountain, from which all these blessings flow, what should your whole life be, but one uninterrupted act of thanksgiving to the Father, giving him thanks by the most willing obedience to his commandments,—the most entire devotedness to his service,—the most *cheerful confidingness* in his love,—and the *most cheerful resignation* to his will. I repeat the words *most cheerful*, because I consider cheerfulness, in trust and resignation, the very soul of thankfulness towards God. And should not you, believer, child of God, thus cheerfully and thankfully confide in *such* a Father's love, and acquiesce in such a Father's will? Can you *distrust* for the provision or comforts of your journey through the wilderness, as far as needful, that love which has provided for you such an inheritance purchased at such a price, to be enjoyed at its close? or repine at any of his dispensations, however afflictive, by which he is making you meet for its enjoyment? Gratefully then reflect, that in *every* trial with which he has ever chastened you, in *every* furnace of affliction through which he has ever made you pass, *this* has been your heavenly Father's gracious design, that all your sufferings, bodily or mental, in their nature and measure, their degree and duration, have been arranged by him for the accomplishment of this design

of his love, with a beautiful adaptation to your peculiar character. And when you consider how large a measure of whatever meetness you possess for your heavenly inheritance, you have acquired under the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the school of sanctified affliction, can you forbear giving thanks unto the Father, most hearty thanks, for those very trials, which have blighted all your hopes of earthly happiness, but which you have so much cause to regard as special proofs of your heavenly Father's love, since he has graciously made them so instrumental in working out for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" Sure I am, *such* will be the feelings with *which*, when you stand upon Mount Sion, and look back on your journey through the wilderness, you will survey these trials; and that some of your sweetest songs of praise will *then* be lifted up, on their account, before the throne. Anticipate *now*, I affectionately conjure you, the feelings of gratitude with which you will *then* regard these trials, and begin *now* before the throne of grace, the song of thankful praise on their account, which you will then pour forth with such rapturous joy before the throne of glory.*

The third vow you make at the sacramental table is one of the most cheerful, thankful resignation to the will, and acquiescence in the appointments of him who died for you; and surely you cannot hesitate at *that* table, heartily to offer up this vow. You have just seen, with the eye of faith, his hands stretched out in agony and death for your everlast-

* Rev. H. White's Sermon—"Meetness for the Inheritance," p. 213.

ing happiness. Can you fear to leave the disposal of all the events of your life in *those* hands? You have just received the cup which reminds you what a cup of horror he drained to the very dregs for you, that you should not drink of the cup of the wrath of God for ever; and can you shrink from drinking any cup which he has prepared, and presents to you; more especially when you remember, it has not a drop of bitterness in it, which is not medicinal and designed to promote your spiritual health and strength? You have seen how, to save you from being cast into the unquenchable fire of hell, the Son of God was content to pass through the fiery furnace of his Father's wrath. Can you then fear to pass through any furnace of affliction, into which he shall permit or cause you to be cast; when you reflect that he sits by as the refiner of the furnace, attempering its heat by his own hands, and watching the progress of the purifying process with the tenderest watchfulness of a Saviour's love? How then can you so wrong his love or wound his heart, as to suspect he will make the furnace *one particle hotter* than he knows to be necessary to accomplish the purpose of his love; even the purification of your soul from the sullyng dross of sin, that it may thus reflect in clearer brightness his own image to his eye—every lovely feature shining with the beauty of holiness in purer light? How much, believer, would you promote your own happiness and your Redeemer's glory, if you were more in the habit of cherishing that realizing, grateful remembrance of his love, which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was chiefly instituted to keep in his people's constant recollection; combined with a confiding assurance (warranted by the endearing ex-

pression “the hairs of your head are all numbered,”) that all the events of your life, even the most minute, and apparently unimportant, the darkest and the brightest, are but so many different coloured threads, woven by our Saviour’s hand, into the web of your life, according to a pattern arranged in his own mind, in which his glory and your happiness are blended together, and for the perfection of which pattern, every event, of whatever character, every alternation of health or sickness, disappointment or success, joy or sorrow, is but a thread of the right colour, inserted exactly in the right place. While kneeling, therefore, at the sacramental-table, when you hear a Saviour’s voice saying, “Cast all thy care upon me; have I not proved that I care for thee? despise not then my chastening, neither faint when thou art rebuked of me; for as many as I love I rebuke and chasten; not willingly, but that they may be more abundantly partakers of my holiness, for thus only can I make them partakers of my glory and happiness.” And will you not most cheerfully vow a vow of the most entire confidingness in your Redeemer’s love, and acquiescence in his will, saying, with a thankful heart, however deep, agonizing, protracted your trials,

‘Lord, though thou bend my spirit low,
Love only will I see;
The very hand that strikes the blow,
Was wounded once for me.’*

Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, &c. Isa. xxiv. 15.

..... The poor sinner not only glorifies Jesus,

* Rev. H. White’s Sermons.—“A Believer’s Sacramental Vows,” p. 91.

actively, when he is praising him, but passively also, when his wants and necessities afford occasion for Jesus to be glorified in giving out of his fulness to his relief. And how is the Lord glorified in the fires? Evidently when in the furnace of affliction, or under the power of temptation, the poor exercised soul glories in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him! When he can, and when he doth receive all, and take all, and feel happy under all, from the consciousness that the Lord's hand is in it, and the Lord's blessing will be upon it. "I was dumb," said one of old, "and opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing." And another ancient sufferer cried out, "Why should a living man complain," &c.? Oh! it is most blessed to see a child of God thus engaged for God, when matters are most dark and discouraging! It is easy, comparatively speaking, for a man to praise God and give him glory, when all things around are gay and smiling: but when songs are heard from the fires; and when the soul feels its own wretchedness, and cries out under it, "My leanness, my leanness!" and is looking to a God in Christ; here is a frame of mind suited to the divine glory. My soul! see that all thy glory be centered in Jesus, and on God in Jesus, as the name of the Lord God of Israel. And, oh! for grace to give him both the praise and the glory, in whom all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory.*

DEAR MADAM,

We were painfully surprised by the account of your heavy trial, the evening before we left G—.

* Hawker's "Evening Portion."

Important circumstances, which could not then be altered, prevented us from stopping to be with you at the time of the funeral; this we much regretted. But sometimes counsel and comfort come more seasonably and with greater force after the first shock of severe trial is a little abated. For, at first, when heavy calamity breaks in suddenly it has the effect of stupifying and confounding the sufferer. Then the mind is unhinged and agitated like the sea in a storm; and if this should be prevented at the first opening of such trial, yet it generally takes place soon after, as we see exemplified in the case of the illustrious pattern of suffering patience, Job. Though at first he bowed submissively to the will of the Almighty, yet it is on record that, soon after, Job "opened his mouth and cursed his day." And from this very circumstance, you may learn not to give up hope of attaining to true resignation and comfort under your trial, though for a time you may find within you a multitude of disorderly, rebellious thoughts which you know not how to control and overcome.

What may be now your feelings and the state of your mind, we can only conjecture. But it may be of some use to point out the right frame of spirit, and the manner of struggling towards it, in circumstances like yours. Such a trial carries with it the voice, "It is the Lord," "Be still and know that I am God," "Stand in awe, and sin not;" and also another voice, "Look unto me and be ye saved," "Come to me and I will give you rest."

You must seek actively to press forward, to behold and approach him who is God manifested in the flesh, "the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of

the world," who was himself the deepest sufferer, a Man of Sorrows; and who, when visibly on earth, looked on the tears and sorrows of mourners with an eye incomparably tender, and with a voice of power said to them "Weep not." He then carried about with him the true balm for the wounds of the heart, which now, unseen, he dispenses from heaven.*

DEAR FRIEND,

Your late bereavement requires special attention and sympathy, more particularly as it may be an occasion for the devil's breaking in upon you with a flood of gloomy and discouraging suggestions. These, however, I hope you will be enabled to strive against and to disregard.

To be humbled under God's mighty hand, and stirred up to renewed exercises of repentance, is your duty. But it is at the same time, your duty to labour after such actings of faith in God's infinite compassion, power and faithfulness, as will bear you above an unprofitable despondency.

Try, then, through the help of the Spirit of grace, and through the precious blood of the everlasting covenant, to get nearer to God than ever before, and to roll over upon him the whole burden of your sorrows and cares. He will impart to you seasonable and mighty consolation. Be not rash to intrude into the secret things of God respecting the state of him who is gone. You know not what may have been, through Almighty grace, transacted between God and his soul, even in his last hours, if not sooner. Endeavour to check the tumult of your thoughts

* Dr. Love's Letters.

here ; or rather look to him who, in the days of his flesh, calmed the unruly winds and waves, to silence the turbulent motions of a mother's affection. It will be a great victory and will bring glory to God and comfort to you, if you are efficaciously taught to bow in this instance to divine sovereignty—to repent of short-comings and provocations, and to cleave to the living, inexhaustible source of all consolation.

The Lord will look for some spiritual fruit to follow this visitation. To be willingly estranged from all the things of time and sense—to look beyond the short-lived connections of this world—to converse familiarly with things invisible and eternal—to loathe sin and to discern the infinite sweetness of Christ—to give up the whole heart to him, and to long earnestly for his immediate presence ; these and such like things, are not only above the reach of corrupted nature, but directly contrary to it. And therefore the Lord must use a merciful kind of violence with us, for accomplishing his gracious designs. We must be instructed with a strong hand, and terrible things in righteousness must sometimes be subservient to the answer of our prayer. "I had fainted," says David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."*

Christian mourner ! dost thou not love the Lord Jesus Christ immeasurably, above every other object in earth or heaven ?

Yea ! I know that such is at least the fondest desire of thine heart ; and although thy love to Jesus be indeed cold, to what either he deserves or thou

* Dr. Love's Letters.

desirest ; yet canst thou with humble confidence, look up to him and say, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee ; whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth whom I desire in comparison of thee !*

Then wouldest thou not, Christian mourner, if some precious opportunity were placed within thy reach, whereby thou mightest be greatly instrumental in advancing thy beloved Redeemer's glory, most gladly and gratefully embrace that opportunity, whatever self-denial, sufferings or sacrifices it might involve ?

Canst thou for one moment hesitate what answer to give ? Need I remind thee of the vast, the infinite debt of obligation thou owest to the Redeemer's love ;—no less than preservation from eternal destruction and the prospect of eternal glory.

Still more, however, to deepen the sense of thy gratitude, and inflame thy desire to glorify him whose love an eternity of praise would be too short to repay, I would stir up thy pure mind, by way of remembrance, to reflect on two circumstances which greatly enhance the Redeemer's love :—

First, His love to thee is the most powerfully disinterested love ; reposing from eternity, with the most perfect complacency, in the bosom of the everlasting Father, and rejoicing in his love and communion with him, with infinite delight : his own perfect blessedness in one sense, could at least have suffered no diminution had he left thee to perish everlasting ; and yet such was the depth and devotedness of his love for thee, that for thy sake he stript himself of all this glory, he emptied himself of this fulness of infinite joy, and voluntarily descended from his throne, and came down to earth, to taber-

nacle there as the greatest sufferer that ever trod its surface, all—all to save thee from everlasting sufferings—to exalt thee to everlasting joy.

The second endearing consideration to which I have alluded, is this—When thy Redeemer undertook the work of thy redemption, he knew perfectly the nature of the undertaking and had fully counted the cost.

This was not the undertaking of a friend who in an ardour of generous enthusiasm embarks on behalf of the object of his affectionate solicitude in some hazardous enterprize, without being fully aware of the extent of suffering and sacrifice in which his generosity may involve him, and afterwards perseveres from an unwillingness (in which pride may mingle with affection,) to relinquish what he has once undertaken, though called to pass through sufferings, which, could he have foreseen them, would have deterred him from engaging in the enterprise.

No! before he left the throne in heaven, the Son of God was perfectly aware of the extent of suffering through which he must pass, to accomplish thine everlasting redemption, and make thee a partaker for eternity of the inheritance of glory among the saints in light.

The whole scene of his future sorrows was spread before him, and yet with Gethsemane and Calvary full in his view, such was his love for thee, that he came down from heaven to suffer and to die on earth, that through his sufferings and death thou mightest live and rejoice for ever.

Canst thou now hesitate to declare that thou wouldest most gladly and gratefully embrace any precious opportunity, placed within thy reach, of

glorifying him who has displayed towards thee such love as this ?

Then let me affectionately remind you that affliction is such an opportunity—the most precious perhaps that earth can afford—one which can only be found in a world of sorrow—one which is the especial privilege of the saints in tribulation, for saints in blessedness can no longer testify their gratitude to him who died for them, or thus seek to advance his glory. And, oh ! should not this consideration constrain believers, with a power of peculiar attraction, rejoicingly and thankfully to welcome and embrace the opportunity which affliction affords them of evincing their gratitude to the Saviour, and promoting his glory through a channel which heaven itself does not supply ; and which, if the precious privilege be not now improved, will never again be placed within their reach, in any period of the coming ages of eternity. Believer ! does not affliction, viewed in *this* light, assume in thine eye a more endearing aspect than it ever before was seen to wear ?

But how, perhaps thou wilt say, does affliction afford such opportunity ? Christian mourner ! dry thy tears and give heed unto me, and I will tell thee. When in thy happier days thou hast been pleading thy beloved Saviour's cause, and endeavouring to recommend to others the gospel of his grace, and the preciousness of his great salvation ; hast thou not often said that it was one of its peculiar recommendations, that it supplies such abundant unfailing divine comfort to the children of sorrow, under every conceivable affliction with which they can be visited in their journey through this vale of tears ; that however they may be deprived of all earthly props and

support, *they* do not sink as others, because beneath them are the everlasting arms ; that however aggravated the nature, or accumulated the number of their sorrows, still *they* do not sorrow as others who have no hope ; because amidst the deepest clouds and darkness that surround the throne of God, they see with the eye of faith the rainbow of covenant mercy encircling that throne, and with its celestial radiance gilding the gloom of his darkest dispensations. To all this the unconverted objects of your Christian solicitude and labour of love have listened with an incredulous smile, regarding your words as the offspring of an enthusiastic imagination, merely, perhaps, observing that it is very easy to be valiant, in contending with imaginary difficulties—magnanimous in bearing trials that we have never encountered, and patient in the endurance of afflictions which we have never felt.

But now the time of trial is come ; the truth of your boast on behalf of the gospel is to be put to the test ; and, as far as we can say, that the Redeemer's glory is identified with the conduct of his people, and the manifestation of the power of his gospel, that glory is at stake, and *you* are responsible for the result. Oh what a solemn—what an affecting consideration !

If, after all, you have boasted of the invisible, divine supports and consolations, which so gloriously bear up and comfort the believer, in the day of trial, those who have listened to your professions incredulously and are now watching your practice narrowly, to see how far they correspond, if they shall see you sinking and sorrowing apparently as unsupported and uncomforted as others, how will they take up that taunting reproach against you, and say—

Behold ! thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands ; thy word hath up-holden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees, but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest ; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is this thy confidence, of which thou didst boast so triumphantly ? Is this thy hope, of which we have heard such magnificent praises in the time of thy prosperity ? Where are those everlasting arms, those divine springs of consolation of which we were told so much ? Said we not truly it was all a pretence—a delusion—an empty boast—a visionary dream ?

How will this confirm them in their prejudices against the gospel—harden them in contempt of the Saviour ; rejection of his grace, neglect of his salvation, rivet the chains of Satan more firmly on their souls, and perhaps settle them in unbelief, and thus seal their eternal condemnation ?

And canst thou bear the thought?—how the Redeemer, who died for thee, will be thus wounded and his holy name blasphemed, and the gospel of his grace despised, and immortal souls destroyed, through thy misconduct, through the dishonour thou hast brought on that gospel, for which thou shouldest most willingly have laid down thy life ! What sorrows hast thou ever known to be compared with this ?

But let us reverse the picture, and glance for a moment at the beautiful contrast which the opposite side supplies.

If, through the divine strength imparted to you, (and which will never be denied to your faithful endeavours and fervent prayers) you are enabled, in the dark and cloudy day of tribulation, to substan-

tiate the hopes of brighter days; to set the stamp of sincerity on all your professions, and exhibit a touching and triumphant display of the faithfulness of the Redeemer, and the power of his religion in supporting and comforting his people, in every time of trouble; if your whole deportment is seen to wear that expression of cheerful submission, so sweetly attempered between stoical sullenness and sinful sorrow, which preaches more eloquently than any words can do, and in language the most affecting, amidst the most afflictive dispensations, seems to say—*It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good*; if all around see that, as far as they can judge, you seem to love the Saviour for his own sake, and to find his service its own reward, and that you as cordially delight in that service, though he has disappointed all your dearest earthly hopes of happiness, as if he had realized them all; if they see that since he so prefers, you are as willing to glorify him by patient suffering as by active exertion, and that, under trials beneath whose crushing pressure the strongest spirit, the stoutest heart, left to themselves, must sink, you are enabled to lift up your head and go on your heavenward way, with indeed a more sobered step, and perhaps a more saddened smile, but still rejoicing—oh! must they not be constrained, when they witness such a triumphant exhibition of the power of the gospel of Christ, to believe that there is a reality in his religion; that what they have heard of its divine supports and consolations must, from what they now see in your example, be true; that no merely earthly principle or power could supply such a spirit, under such a trial; that the tree which bears such fruit must be of God's

planting—must have been originally produced from a celestial seed, and be yet destined to flourish everlasting in a celestial clime.

And if, through the testimony which thou hast thus been enabled to bear, to the faithfulness and love of him who died for thee, to the preciousness of his gospel and the power of his grace, but one sinner may be led to prostrate himself in humble adoration at the Saviour's feet, desiring an interest in the blessings of his smile and his salvation ; if but one wanderer may be led, through the instrumentality of thy sanctified afflictions, to the possession of the peace of God on earth and the glory of God in heaven. Oh ! shouldst thou not rejoice with exceeding great joy, in the tribulations appointed for thee, whatever their weight, or number, or measure may have been ; more especially when thou reflectest that in a world where the remembrance of all the happiness thou couldst have enjoyed on earth (even had all thy fondest hopes been realized, and yielded a felicity surpassing far thy most sanguine expectations) would afford thee no more satisfaction, in the retrospect, than thou now derivest from the remembrance of the toys that amused thine infancy, or the sports that gladdened thy childish days,—in that world the sight of the fellow-sinner, who, through the instrumentality of thy sorrows, has become a fellow-partaker with thee of everlasting joy, and the sound of his voice mingling with thine in the song of praise to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever, will supply thy glorified spirit with a source of joy, as pure as the bliss of angels—as precious as the smile of God—as exalted as the throne of heaven, and as enduring as the ages of eternity.*

* Hugh White's Meditations, p. 313.

CHAPTER VI.

HE REJOICES IN HAVING FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IN SUFFERING.

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Cor. i. 9.

Think, my soul, what a dignity believers in Jesus are called unto, when brought into a nearness of communion with their glorious Head, in any exercise of trial or affliction for his sake. God is faithful in the appointment! How? In that it proves God's fulfilment of his covenant promises, when Jesus and his members are considered by him as One. God is faithful in manifesting this oneness and fellowship, in making the members conformable to their glorious Head, by trials or suffering. God is faithful in sending the affliction; and God manifests his faithfulness in guiding through it, and supporting under it. The trial itself, be it what it may, is a discovery of the covenant love and faithfulness of Jehovah. Nay, God would not have manifested his faithfulness to a believer without it. What a sweet consoling thought

is this, to the afflicted, exercised followers of the Lamb under their trials! My soul, do thou look at the subject, and learn from it to consider all tribulation in this view, and what a blessedness will pour in upon thee from so doing. Hath the Lord called thee to exercises? Hath the progress of them led thee more to Jesus? Hath the issue of them tended to endear Jesus? O, then, proclaim God's faithfulness. "I know, O Lord," saith one of old, under trials, "that thy judgments are right, and that thou in very faithfulness hast afflicted me." Precious Jesus! what a dignified path is tribulation, when we are enabled to see thy footsteps going before, marked with blood.*

. . . : . To suffer with Christ and to be glorified with him, seem closely connected. There is something sweet in being pruned by a wounded hand; and, oh, when we feel the drowsiness of our affections, our proneness to depart from him, and to be satisfied at a distance, have we not cause to be in love with our trials? That he should be so jealous of our friendship now, to force true happiness upon us, in spite of ourselves, to drive us to his strength, to live upon his promises, and lay our head upon his breast. He is not satisfied that his tried children should be common Christians. He considers us—and if he says, "prove me, my child," it is that he may introduce us into the innermost chambers of his faithfulness. No doubt, in a short time, we shall know much of this, but persecution is the Christian's halo, and trials his triumph. He is called to glorify the Lord *in the fires*. It is a noble

* Hawker's "Morning Portion."

thing to be accounted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake. What soldier would flinch from the combat, when his captain is gone before him in the fore-front of the battle? What soldier of Christ is he who, having the assurance of victory and honour, accounts it a privilege to be out of the field? Are we not called to suffering? Are we not chosen as witnesses to his resurrection, in being above, far beyond its sting? Let us expect a succession of trial and suffering—to have just to pass from trouble to trouble. In our God, *we are able.**

In our prosperity we pass by the cross, that is carelessly and regardlessly; at the best we do but shake our heads a little. The reading of the story of Christ's passion stirs up some compassion towards him, and passion against his persecutors; but it is quickly gone; we forget as soon as we get into the world again; but now let God prick our flesh with some sore affliction; let him fill our bones with pain, and set us on fire with a burning fever; let our feet be hurt in the stocks, or the iron enter into our souls; let us be destitute, afflicted, tormented, &c. then happily will we sit down and look upon him whom we have pierced, and begin to say within ourselves, And are the chips of the cross so heavy? What then was the cross itself? which first my Redeemer did bear, and then it did bear him! Are a few bodily pains so bitter? What then were the agonies which the Lord of glory sustained in his soul? Is the wrath of man so piercing? what was the wrath of God which scorched his righteous soul? Are the buffetings of

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

men so grievous? What were the buffetings of Satan, which our Lord sustained? Is it such a heart-piercing affliction to be deserted of friends? What was it then for him who was the Son of God's love, the darling of his bosom, to be deserted of his Father, which made him cry out, to the astonishment of heaven and earth, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Is a chain so heavy, a prison so loathsome, the sentence and execution of death so dreadful, oh, what was it for him who made heaven and earth to be bound with a chain, hurried up and down from one unrighteous judge to another; mocked, abused, spit upon, buffeted, reviled, cast into prison, arraigned, condemned, executed in a most shameful and an accursed manner! Oh, what was it for him to endure all this contradiction of sinners, rage of the devil, and wrath of God, in comparison of whom the most righteous person that ever was, may say, with the good thief on the cross—*And we indeed justly; but he, what evil hath he done?* And thus, as the Lord Jesus, by the sensible experience of his own passion, came perfectly to understand what his poor members suffer while they are in the body, so we, by the remainders of his cross, which he hath bequeathed to us as a legacy, come in some measure to understand the sufferings of Christ; or at least, by comparing things of such vast disproportion, to guess at what we cannot understand.

Our own troubles enable us much better to conceive what love burned in that heart, towards our sinful souls, when nailed to the cross for their salvation. A sword went through my heart when my blessed wife was lying in the scorching fever; and I

then felt what it cost to redeem my soul more sensibly than ever ! *

In Christ's afflictions every believer may find the counterpart of his own.

Born of parents occupying the lowest rank in society, he was from his earliest infancy subject to the privations of poverty ; and even in advanced life, and when engaged in the prosecution of his public ministry, " he had not where to lay his head." Are any of his people subject to the same privations, straitened in their worldly circumstances, and dependent on the daily bounty of providence for the supply of their simplest wants. And do they sometimes feel a disposition to be " careful and troubled," or even to murmur at the unequal distribution of temporal comforts ? Let them look to the Saviour, and let them reflect that it was for their sakes he descended into a state of poverty, that he might give a perfect example of contentment and cheerfulness, even in the most adverse circumstances, and of humble trust in the providence of him who " feeds the ravens when they cry." And can they find it in their hearts to murmur or complain because of *their* poverty, when they read of the poverty of the Son of God ?

Are any afflicted by reason of the alienation of friends, or the malice of enemies ? Are they suffering in their good name, or in their worldly respectability, by ridicule or calumny ? Or have they tasted the bitterness of being betrayed by those in whom they reposed confidence, or repaid with ingratitude by those whom they had served !

* Venn's Letters.

Let them look to the Saviour, and behold him forsaken in early life by his nearest relatives—surrounded with enemies the most inveterate and hostile, because he had offered no provocation except to love—his character assailed as one in league with Beelzebub, although he was infinitely holier than we can pretend to be, followed by persecution whithersoever he went—repaid with ingratitude even by those for whose benefit he had exerted miraculous power, and at length betrayed by one of his own disciples, who had lived and sojourned with him for years! And shall any complaint be heard from us, respecting the treachery of friends or the malice of enemies, when none proceeded from the Son of God? Or shall we venture to cherish resentment or to meditate revenge, when we read that when he *was reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not*, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously; and died with these words on his lips, “Father, forgive them,” &c. Are any called in the course of Providence to endure sufferings unusually severe, or to make sacrifices peculiarly painful, or to undertake labours from which they are disposed to shrink? Let them look to the Captain of their salvation, who felt, as they feel, the severity of his trials, and the arduous nature of his work; and who more than once expressed his feelings in this earnest supplication, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*; but added, *Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done*.

And can they after this venture in any thing to oppose the will, or to murmur at the appointments of God, when Christ in the very depths of his agony, resigned himself to suffer according to his Father's will? In the lot of our Saviour, not only one, or a

few of these evils were found, but all were combined, and each in its highest measure, as if it were God's purpose to exhibit in his person every form of human suffering, and in one "Man of sorrows" to give an example to all who are in any measure "acquainted with grief." We can scarcely point to one form of misery, excepting that of personal guilt, of which we may not find a counterpart in the life of Jesus. And thus was his example *perfected*—a suffering Saviour, he comes the pattern of his suffering people.*

Let us embrace the doctrine of the cross, as the true and proper joy of man upon earth. Shall the servant expect a smoother path than his Lord? Let it suffice that *Neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor peril, nor sword, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ.* In every trial our Saviour seems to say to us, *Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?* His estimate was, when about to suffer, *Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* Let us arm ourselves with the same mind; *being strengthened with all might by his glorious power, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness.* There remaineth a rest to the people of God, which must be ardently desired by weary pilgrims. But though delayed, the inheritance is certain, and the promise is sure. *Him that overcometh, &c.* Rev. iii. 12.†

Afflictions are honourable, as they advance our conformity to Jesus our Lord, who was a man of

* Buchanan's "Comfort in Affliction," p. 99.

† Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 507. C. Cecil's Remarks.

sorrows for our sake. Methinks if we could go to heaven without suffering, we should be unwilling to desire it. Why should we ever wish to go by any other path than that which he has consecrated and endeared by his own example? especially as his people's sufferings are not penal, there is no wrath in them ; the cup he puts in their hands is very different from that which he drank for their sakes, and is only medicinal, to promote their chief good.*

Surely when we see the most and the best of the Lord's children so often in heaviness, and when we consider how much he loves them, and what he has done and prepared for them, we may take it for granted that there is a needs be for their sufferings. For it would be easy to his power, and not a thousandth part of what his love intends to do for them, should he make their whole life here, from the hour of their conversion to their death, a continual course of satisfaction and comfort, without anything to distress them from within or from without. But were it so, should we not miss many advantages ? In the first place, we should not then be very conformable to our Head, nor be able to say, " as he was, so are we in this world." Methinks a believer would be ashamed to be so utterly unlike his Lord. What ! the Master *always* a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and the servant *always* happy and full of comfort ! Jesus despised, reproached, neglected, opposed and betrayed ; and his people admired and caressed ; *he* living in the want of all things, and *they* filled with abundance ; *he* sweating blood for anguish, and *they* strangers to distress ; how unsuitable would these

* Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 25.

things be! How much better to be called to the honour of filling up the measure of his sufferings! A cup was put into his hand on one account, and his love engaged him to drink it for us. The wrath which it contained he drank wholly himself, but he left us a little affliction to taste, that we might pledge him, and remember how he loved us, and how much more he endured for us than he will ever call us to endure for him.*

We pass from the pleasures of the world, to its trials and afflictions. Even these are yours; none so heavy, none so grievous, that you do not feel from your inmost heart, I would not have been deprived of this, I would not have gone without this token of my Father's love, for any blessing that the world could offer me. I feel my very trials among my privileges, and would bless God for these my necessary medicines, as well as for my daily food. Doubtless some will say that this is exaggeration, that this is more than even the best of men can realize; that it is enough to bear afflictions,—it is too much to rejoice in them. But there is reason to believe, that if the heart of every true Christian were laid open to the inspection of his fellow-men, as it is to him from whom no secrets are hid, we should be justified in the declaration, that the sorrows and trials of earth are so entirely yours, yours to benefit and to profit by, yours to be content with, and in some cases even to rejoice in, as its brightest pleasures and most delightful gratifications.*

* Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 209.

† Blunt's Sermons, "The Saints on Earth," "All things are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 21.

Seeing my sins, and the sins of my youth, deserved strokes, how am I obliged to my Lord, who amongst many crosses has given me a chosen cross, viz. to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus. Since I must have chains, he would put golden chains on me, watered over with many consolations. Seeing I must have sorrow, (for I have sinned, O Preserver of mankind!) he hath chosen for me joyful sorrow—spiritual glorious sorrow. My crosses come through mercy, and the hand of love, from the kind heart of a brother, Christ my Lord, and therefore they are sweet.*

Worthy and dear Brother, I write that from my heart which you now read. 1st. I vouch, that sighing under the cross of Christ is sweeter to me by far, than all the kingdoms in the world could probably be. 2d. If you, and my dearest acquaintance in Christ, reap any fruit by my sufferings, let me be weighed in God's even balance, if my joy be not fulfilled. What am I to carry the marks of such a great King? 3rd. Let no man think he shall lose at Christ's hands in suffering for him; herein I find liberty, joy, access, life, comfort, love, faith, submission, patience, and resolution, to take delight in waiting for him: and withal, in my race, he hath come near me, and let me see the gold and crown. What want I then, but fruition and real enjoyment, which is reserved to my better country? 4th. I doubt not but my Lord is preparing me for heavier trials. I am most ready, at the good pleasure of my Lord, and in the strength of his grace, for any thing he shall be pleased to call me to; neither shall the last messenger death, be held at the door when he shall knock. If my Lord

* Rutherford's Letters.

will take honour of such a one as me, how glad and joyful shall my soul be! *

I cannot but acquaint your Ladyship with the kind dealing of Christ to my soul in the house of my pilgrimage, that your Ladyship may know Christ is as good as he is called ; for at my first entry into this trial, (being cast down and troubled with jealousies of his love, whose name and testimony I now bear in my bonds,) I feared that I was but a dry tree cast out of the vineyard ; but blessed be his name ! the dry tree was in the fire, but was not burned ; his dew came down and quickened the root of a withered plant, and now he is come again with joy, and hath been pleased to feast his afflicted prisoner with the joy of his consolations : now I weep, but am not sad, I am chastened, but I die not ; I have loss, but I want nothing ; this water cannot drown me, this fire cannot burn me, because of the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush. The worst things of Christ, his reproaches, his cross, are better than Egypt's treasures : he hath opened his door, and taken a poor sinner into his house of wine.*

MUCH HONOURED SIR,

Grace, mercy and peace be to you. I received your letter, which refreshed me. Except from your son and my brother, I have seen few letters from my acquaintance in that country, which maketh me heavy ; but I have the company of the Lord, who can teach us all to be kind, and in the right way. It pleaseth him to come and visit a sad prisoner and a

* S. Rutherford to Carleton.

† S. Rutherford to Lady Hallkill.

solitary stranger : his spikenard casteth a perfume, et my sweet hath some sour with it, wherein I must squiesce, for there is no reason why his comforts should be unmixed ; but I verily think Christ hath led me now up to a point in Christianity that I never reached before. Christ beareth me good company, he hath eased me when I saw it not ; lifting the cross off my shoulders, so that I think it to be but a feather, because underneath are the everlasting arms. Nothing breaketh my heart, but that I cannot speak of the Bridegroom's glory to the daughters of Jerusalem. charge you, in the name of Christ, that you tell all ou see of it; and yet it is above telling and understanding. Would that all the kingdom were as I am, except these bonds ! They know not the love the Lord Jesus sheweth to a prisoner ; he hath sealed my sufferings with comforts : in my salvation, this is the only way to the new city. write this to confirm you. I write now what I have seen as well as heard. Now and then, my silence burneth up my spirit ; but Christ hath said, " Thy reward is laid up in heaven," and this from a king's mouth rejoiceth my heart : at other times I am sad, welling in Kedar's tents. The Lord hath removed my brethren and my acquaintance far from me ; and may be I am forgotten in the place where the Lord made me the instrument to do some good : but I see his is vanity in me. Let him do with me what he leaseth, if he bring salvation out of it to me.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,
I am almost wearying, yea, wondering, that you

* S. Rutherford to A. Gordon of Earlstoun.

write not to me, though I know it is not forgetfulness. As for myself, I am very well, all glory to God. I was before at variance with Christ; but it was unlawful; and because his whole providence was not yea and nay to my yea and nay, and because I believed his outward look rather than his faithful promise. Yet he bath in patience waited for me till I have come to myself, and bath not taken advantage of my weak apprehensions of his goodness. Great and holy is his name. He looketh to what I desire to be, and not to what I am. Grace tried is more than grace; it is glory in its infancy. Who knoweth the truth of grace without a trial? O how little Christ getteth of us but what he winneth (so to speak) with much toil and pains! and how soon would faith freeze without a cross! When Christ blesseth his own crosses with a tongue, they breathe out his love, wisdom, kindness, and care of us. Why should I start though my Lord's plough make deep furrows on my soul? I know he is no idle husbandman: he purposeth a crop, and would that this white withered ground were made fertile to bear a crop for him, by whom it is so painfully dressed; and that this fallow ground were broken up. How sweet and comfortable have the thoughts of him been to me in my bonds! I have found them a sufficient recompense of reward. O my debt of praise, how weighty is it, and how far run up! Brother, I charge you before God, that you speak to others, and write them to help me to praise; and yet in this summer blink, I am with the tear in my eye; for, by reason of my silence, sorrow hath filled me. My harp is hanged upon the willow trees, because I am in a strange land.*

* S. Rutherford to Robert Gordon of Knockbrex.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,

You are heartily welcome to my world of suffering, and heartily welcome to my father's house; God give you much joy of your new master. If I have been in the house before you, I were not faithful to give the house an ill name, or to speak evil of the Lord of the family: I rather wish for God's Holy Spirit (O Lord! breathe upon me with that Spirit!) to tell you the fashion of the house. One thing I can say, that by patiently waiting, you will grow into favour with the Lord of the house; wait on, till you get some good from Christ; ease yourself, and let him hear all; lay all your weights and your burdens, by faith, on Christ; he can, he will bear you. I rejoice that he hath come, and hath chosen you in the furnace; it was even there that he appointed to meet you: he keepeth the good old way with you that was in Hosea's days—(Hos. ii. 14.) *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.* There was no talking to her heart while she was in the fair flourishing city, and at ease, but out in the cold, hungry, waste wilderness, he allureth her; he whispered news into her ear there and said—*Thou art mine.* If I should tell you, from some weak experience, what I have found in Christ, you, or others, would hardly believe me. I thought not the hundredth part of Christ, long since, that I do now; though, alas! my thoughts are still infinitely below his worth. I have his faith, and truth, and promise, all engaged, that I shall obtain that for which I hunger, and I esteem that the choice of my happiness; and for Christ's cross, especially that best of crosses, to suffer for his Name's sake, I esteem it more than I

can speak or write unto you. The more heavily crossed the soul is, it is still the lighter for the journey. Now, would to God all cold-blooded, faint-hearted soldiers of Christ, would look again to Jesus and to his love ; and, when they look, I would have them to look again, and again, and fill themselves with beholding Christ's beauty ; and, I dare say, then he would be highly esteemed of many. It is my daily growing sorrow, that he doth so great things for my soul, and he never yet got any thing of me worth speaking of. Sir, I charge you help me to praise him. If men could do no more, I would have them to wonder; if we cannot be filled with Christ's love, we may be filled with wondering. . . . *

MADAM,

I long to hear how it goeth with you and your children. I exhort you not to lose breath, nor to faint in your journey ; the way is not so long to your home as it was ; you are fast coming within reach of your glorious crown. Your Lord Jesus was sore travailed ere he got up the mount; it was he who said *Father, save me! I am poured out like water. All my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd.* I am sure you love the way the better that his holy feet trod it before you ; your Lord will not leave you to die by yourself by the way. I know you have sad hours when the Comforter is hid under the veil, and when you enquire for him and find him gone ; yet make his sweet comforts your own, and be not strange and shame-faced

* S. Rutherford to Robert Stewart.

with Christ ; he likes homely dealing with him best ; when your winter storms are over, the summer of your Lord shall come ; he will do you good in your latter end. Take no heavier concern for your children than your Lord alloweth ; give them room beside your heart, but not in the yolk of your heart, where Christ should be ; for then they are your idols, not your children ; if your Lord take any of them home to his house before the storm come on, take it well ; let our Lord pluck his own fruit at any season he pleaseth ; they are not lost to you, they are laid up and treasured in heaven, where our Lord's best jewels lie. Then be of good heart ; heaven is yours, and that is a word few can say. Now the great Shepherd of the sheep, and the very God of peace confirm and establish you, to the day of the appearance of Christ our Lord.*

REVEREND AND DEAR BROTHER,

Grace, mercy and peace be with you. I am well, and I verily count more of the sufferings of my Lord than of this world's lustre and over-gilded glory. I dare not say but my Lord hath fully recompensed my sadness with his joys ; my losses with his own presence. I find it a sweet and rich thing to exchange my sorrows with Christ's joys ; my afflictions with that sweet peace I have with himself. Go on, my dear brother, in the strength of the Lord ; put Christ's love to the trial, and put upon it burdens, and then it will appear love indeed. We employ not his love, and therefore we know it not. Let us be fajthful, and care for our own part, which is to do

* S. Rutherford to Lady Gaitgirth.

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and suffer for him, and lay Christ's part on himself, and leave it there. Duties are ours, events are God's. When our faith goeth to meddle with events, and to question God's providence, and beginneth to say—‘How wilt thou do this and that?’ we lose ground; we have nothing to do there. It is our part to let the Almighty exercise his own office.*

* S. Rutherford to the Rev. W. Dalglash.

CHAPTER VII.

HE WAITS PATIENTLY THE LORD'S TIME FOR
DELIVERANCE.—Zech. xiv. 6, 7.

. AN involuntary inquiry will sometimes put itself forth—“ How long, Lord, shall these afflictions last? They have continued a long season; year after year have I looked for the promised deliverance. How long, O Lord? *Are thy mercies clean gone for ever?* ” But let us remember that while we are allowed, nay invited and encouraged humbly to plead with him, yet we must not limit nor dictate as to time or measure. Let us not accustom our minds to dwell upon the *long* or the *short*: we must not take the measuring line of days, months, or years with him, to whom past, present, and to come, are one and the same. It is his sacred design and purpose towards us, at which we must look; it is by the progress of our cure and healing, that we must measure. And we know that so inveterate are our diseases, that to recover us is a mighty work. It is true, a Sovereign Power might, if he saw good, complete the work in us at any period of our lives that he

pleased ; but since he worketh after the counsel of his own Almighty wisdom and will, and since he has ordained means and various providential dispensations, to accomplish his designs of mercy and grace in us—let us simply yield ourselves to God, and lie in his hands, as clay in the hands of the potter : and let us refresh our souls by looking at the *great cloud of witnesses* with which we are encompassed. We are led by the same hand that led Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We are under the same Almighty protection that was over the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the wilderness.

The 11th chapter of Hebrews gives us an animating view of the victorious power of faith. We are not called to such fiery trials and conflicts as they were ; yet they were able to triumph over all ; and so shall we also, by the same divine power. Even Jesus, our glorious Head, condescended to bear such sufferings as the strongest of his members must have sunk under. Let us therefore look at him—the *Author and the Finisher of our faith*—that we *faint not*, neither be weary. He will give us fresh supplies of grace, moment after moment ; and when our hearts begin to droop, and our eyes fail with looking upwards, if we can but look with the eye of faith, we shall receive invigoration and strength according to our need.

I find the only way of getting on is to live by the day. I should even now utterly faint, if I suffered myself to look beyond the day, or inquire How long shall these trials last ? and if I did not constantly endeavour to keep my eye fixed upon that power and goodness, that, in *one moment*, if it pleased him, could change the whole course of our affairs. I often say,

with her of old, *Thou, Lord, seest me*; thou seest me struggling with this wave and conflicting with the other; and thou hast all power, both in heaven and earth; thou hast only to speak the word, and every difficulty shall be removed in an instant—therefore, that my trials continue can only be resolved into thy will. Thus let us really and practically set the Lord always before us; let us expect great things and hope to the end; remembering how light all will appear, the moment we set our foot on that bright shore where no sorrow can follow us. I believe that pride and independence of spirit, with some other peculiar evils of the heart, can only be cured by sanctified afflictions. Let us therefore learn of the apostle to count them happy that endure. Though I know but little as I ought to know of humiliation, submission and deep self-abasement, yet that little yields me more peace and real satisfaction than I ever found in the gratification of my proudest and fondest wishes. Oh, it is sweet to lie, as a humble penitent, at the feet of Jesus; and to say, from the heart, “Give me thyself,” let me be a living fruitful branch in thee—the true Vine—and then deal with me as seemeth good in thy sight! I verily believe there is no such close communion and converse with God, as when we are under his immediate discipline, and to obtain such a delightful intercourse, what cost is too high? *

Man in affliction would fain be delivered; have the yoke taken off; men make more haste to get their afflictions removed than sanctified; but this is not

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 328.

the work God looks for. When God intends good and happiness to the soul by present chastisement, he pitcheth the soul upon the present duty, which is to *hear the rod and who hath appointed it*; (Isa. xi. 9.) to discern God's aim, and to find out the meaning of the present dispensation; to say to God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more. (Job xxxiv. 31, 32.) To reflect upon our ways and spirit, to complain of our sins and not of punishment; "Wherefore doth a living man complain," &c. (Lam. iii. 39.) To think the present condition the best; "to have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content;" (Phil. iv. 11.) in our patience to possess our souls (Luke xxi. 19.) to rejoice in God, yea, to rejoice in tribulation; (Rom. v. 2, 3.) to mind the public calamities of the church more, and our private sufferings less; to pray for the welfare of Zion; (Psalm cxxii. 6.) to lift up Jesus Christ, and make him glorious by our afflictions; *that Christ may be magnified in our bodies, whether it be by life or by death.*" (Phil. i. 20.) Paul studied more how to *adorn* the cross than to avoid it; how to render persecution amiable; and if he must suffer for Christ, yet that Christ might not suffer by him; that Christ might be exalted and the church edified. (Col. i. 24.) And, lastly, to *commit the keeping of our souls to God, in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* (1 Pet. iv. 19.)*

St. James gives the Hebrews this cordial:—
"Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of

* Case, p. 66.

the Lord ; behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth," &c. He puts great stress upon the coming of the Lord—" Yet a little while," and your Lord will come to appear for you ; it is true you are in a fiery trial, your God calls you to it ; and it may seem to you a long trial, but he has promised grace sufficient to bear it ; trust him then, and he will keep you patient. He knows your frame and temper, and bids you look about you, and see how the husbandman waits, having only a general promise that seed-time and harvest shall not fail ; and is it not more reasonable that you should wait with patience the end of the Lord. He sows his seed and leaves it. It endures much hard weather, frost and snow, and rough winds, and wintry storms. Summer comes, but he must still wait : his corn is in ear, yet is liable to suffer from long droughts and from blights, and to be beat down with heavy thunder showers ; but he has *long patience*. At last he is not disappointed of his hope ; he reaps the precious fruit of the earth and gathers in his joyful harvest. Behold, O my soul, and imitate. How strong is his faith ! Is thine like his ? God has only said, that the seasons shall not fail, he has not said that the harvest, in field and country, shall not fail, yet the farmer sows in faith, and waits in patience. But the promise is sure to thee—" He that believeth shall never be confounded ;" dost thou believe this with a hope that maketh not ashamed ? He has long patience ; how is thine ? Art thou not weary and faint in thy mind ? Canst thou hold thee still in the Lord, and abide patiently upon him, when he chastens thee and seems in anger to cast thee off. He waits long for a harvest of perishing things, and canst thou not

wait to have thy fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life? Oh, what need hast thou of patience! Seek it, pray for it, try of thy God to establish thy heart, that thou mayst possess thy soul in patience, so long as the Lord shall please to exercise thee with troubles. And never forget that he will certainly come quickly: "Wait thou on the Lord, O my soul, be of good courage."

Patience is the grace suited to all trials, because it bears them in the strength of God: for it consists in trusting to his sure word of promise, and believing it against sense and feeling. Faith says, This present trial comes from the love of my covenant God; patience says, Then I shall bear it till he bring it to a good issue. Whatever the trial be, patience has the same promise, and the same promise-keeping God to trust in. If he send a variety of trials, it is only to give a variety of proofs that he is faithful who hath promised.

He knows we have divers diseases which must have divers remedies to heal them. We have manifold evils in us which require manifold afflictions to subdue them.

A good teacher brings his scholars forward; and when they are gone through one book, and are well grounded in it, then he advances them to another; when they have learned Latin he puts them into Greek. God trains up his scholars in various exercises, but all for their improvement. He does not consult what would please them, but he changes the lesson as he sees needful. He knows when their faith wants confirming, when their patience needs establishing, and therefore in much mercy he sends a new trial for the growth of these graces.*

* Romaine's "Walk of Faith."

"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus; when he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was." John xi. 5, 6.

But why this delay? Why does not Jesus fly as usual to the assistance of an afflicted family whom he loved? Why does he not pronounce a word of his power, and Lazarus shall be healed? What! Jesus loves Lazarus, and he leaves him a prey to suffering! Jesus loves Martha and Mary, and he leaves them a prey to anguish! The disease makes frightful advances; Lazarus feels the sources of life drying up within his breast; his sisters with grief behold the veil of death spreading over his eyes; the tears of all flow in abundance, at the thought of the approaching separation; and Jesus, their divine Friend, who never remained insensible to any of our human miseries,—Jesus arrives not! Two entire days pass away—Lazarus dies—and Jesus is not there! Can this be a proof of his love? Is it true that he loves Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus?

Thus reasons the man who understands not the "ways of the Lord," who sees in grief nothing but grief, in trials nothing but the trial, and who appreciates deliverance only according to the promptitude with which it is vouchsafed. But Jesus, who in all things aims at the "glory of God," and the eternal salvation of souls, does not tolerate in his disciples this cowardly fear of suffering. He wishes to teach them to love his will more than their own enjoyment, to desire the feeling of his love more than their own deliverance, even in his most painful dispensations. Can I not appeal to your own experience, my dear brethren, whom the Lord hath caused to pass through the fur-

nace of affliction. Have not your trials taught you this great truth? What has been the first cry which has escaped from your heart at such moments? What have you felt when the Lord has not answered your cry? when he has allowed your grief and your distress to go on augmenting; when he has allowed you to spend long nights in painful sleeplessness; or when he has called you to watch over the bed of some beloved relative, whom disease was wasting away? Tell it for our instruction, and that we may profit by your experience, have you not thought that the Lord would remain for ever deaf to your supplications and to your sighs? Have you not doubted the efficacy of prayer? Were not the promises of God without power to your heart? Say also, have you not been constrained to acknowledge that it was so, because you had not yet been really humbled under the hand of God; because you had not bowed your head in submission to his will; because you sighed only to be delivered from the evils that weighed upon your soul; because that after you had prayed, "O God, if it be possible let this cup pass from me," you had not courage to add with sincerity, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."*

The soul that shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his holy temple, must be prepared for this by combats and by trials. This is the method of training which the Lord has invariably used with all those of his children whom he has purposed to exalt to eminent stations, and to employ for the instruction and enlightening of ages. He has made them all

* Rev. Hugh White. Family of Bethany, p. 100.

travel the gloomy paths of affliction ; he has cast them into the furnace, that their faith might come forth purified from the defilements of pride and sin. Abraham, the father of the faithful, proceeds from trial to trial, from contest to contest ; he travels a dark road as unknown to him as Mount Moriah, where he was to sacrifice the object of his dearest affections ; he has to hope against hope. On the contrary, the Lord appears to render his ways more easy to the less privileged objects of his love. A centurion of Capernaum, who perhaps scarcely knows the God whom the heathen reject, comes to Jesus to ask him to heal his servant whom he loves : immediately he receives from him the answer, " I will come and heal him," and his " servant was healed in the self-same hour." Two poor blind men hear that He whom all Israel knew by his acts of mercy, passes by ; with a loud voice they supplicate from him a look of compassion. He stops, speaks a word of favour, and the blind men have received their sight. But the woman of Canaan, a heroine of faith, whose only daughter is at the point of death, comes to Jesus ; with tears she implores comfort and assistance from him ; she receives a harsh reply—a refusal of all favour ! But by this means she is made to exhibit to all Israel, and to all future ages, a most splendid example of victorious faith. The great apostle Paul himself, three times prays to be delivered from some painful trial, and he receives for an answer these words, " My grace is sufficient for thee ; " " My strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." Thus the Lord leads his children ; he seems insensible to their cries of grief ; darkness thickens around them ; the night becomes more deep ; but it is only to render more

bright the dawn of the day of consolation. Often it is, when the heart, overpowered, ceases to send up to heaven those sighs which it deems useless ; when the last ray of hope has expired amid the gloom of distress ; when all assistance appears impossible, and all human consolation has vanished,—that Jesus Christ presents himself to his child, and changes his darkness into light—his tears into songs of thanksgiving. It is not till Lazarus has sunk into the cold embraces of death ; till he has gone down into the grave, and his sisters, in tears and in the garb of mourning, imagine that they have no other comfort in this world, than to go and weep over the tomb of a beloved brother, that Jesus appears at Bethany, and with the authority of a Master, issues his commands to death and the grave, and draws glory to God from the dust of the tomb. O thou wisdom, power, love of my God ! when shall we learn to know thee, to adore thee, to submit ourselves in a religious silence to all that thou doest for our eternal happiness ? The divines of this world, ignorant of the ways of God with his children, whose sanctification and salvation he so graciously designs, have devised a thousand hypotheses for explaining the conduct of Jesus in leaving his friend for two days without assistance in a state of suffering. One tells us, that he was detained by some indispensable engagements ; another, that he did not think Lazarus in danger ; a third—Fools ! will you then always lose sight of the glory of God, and the salvation of immortal souls ? Will you think only of earth ; of sickness, of pain, of death, and never of the eternal happiness of beings whom Jesus forms for heaven in the school of his Spirit, and of affliction ? Let us raise our thoughts

higher, if we would comprehend the ways of God, and his counsels toward us. "He willeth not the death of a sinner," but his conversion and life. He willeth not that his children, whom he hath already converted, should remain entangled in the servile chains of the world and of corruption. He breaks those chains; and if the blows which he strikes ring mournfully on our heart, let us learn "to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it." My God! what wilt thou have me to do? What sacrifice shall I make? What idol shall I offer upon the altar of thine eternal love? Since thou hast saved me, since thou hast loved me, shew me by what path thou wouldest have me to reach thy heavenly Zion, the assembly of the first-born—the place where all those who have a heart to love thee shall meet, and where nothing that defileth shall ever enter?*

"Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Luke xxii.

It is impossible, from these words, to believe that our Lord shrunk from the work for which he had come into the world. This was the great object of his life and sufferings; this was the baptism with which he was to be baptized. He longed to finish his work, and the object of his prayer seems to be, only that if possible the time of his intense agony might be shortened. But observe the words that follow: "Not my will, but thine be done." Now, this brings before us a blessed part of the Christian's experience in the hour of sorrow. It declares plainly to us that God never meant us to be callous and indifferent

* Family of Bethany, p. 105.

under suffering, that he never intended that we should repress the tears of natural affection, or that we should do otherwise than deeply feel the trials and sufferings to which he calls us. Nor is it wrong for us under the sufferings and trials of life, to supplicate God for their removal. Nay, we believe it is the duty of the Christian, to pray that his sorrows and trials may be removed, only with this reserve, "Not my will, but thine be done." Anxious to be relieved from the heavy burden, but not one moment sooner than is consistent with the will of his Heavenly Father. The Christian is safe when he prays in the spirit and language of his Divine Master, "Father, if it be possible remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."*

DEARLY BELOVED IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you. Few know the heart of a stranger and a prisoner. I am in the hand of mine enemies. I would honest and lawful means were essayed for bringing me home to my charge; but however it be, I wait for the Lord. Lord, give me submission to wait on! My heart is sad, that my days flee away, and I do no service to my Lord in his house, now when his harvest, and the souls of poor perishing sinners, require it; but his ways are not like my ways, neither can I find him out. O that he would shine upon my darkness, and bring forth my morning light from under the thick cloud that is spread over me! That day my mouth was closed, the bloom fell off my branches, and my joy did cast the flower. Howbeit I have been casting myself under Christ's feet, and wrestling to believe: yet my

* Rev. D. Drummond.

fainting cometh before I eat, and my faith hath bowed under this almost unsupportable weight. O that it break not ! I dare not say that the Lord hath put out my candle, and broken the stakes of my tabernacle : but I have tasted bitterness, and eaten gall and wormwood, since that day my Master laid bonds upon me, to speak no more. I speak not this because the Lord is unkind to me, but because beholders on dry land see not my sea-storm : the witnesses of my cross are but strangers to my sad days and nights. O that Christ would come to me, and bring summer with him ! that I might preach his beauty and glory as I once did, before my clay tent be removed to darkness : that my branches might be watered with the dew of God, and my joy in his work might grow green again, and bud and send out a flower ! But I am a short-sighted creature, and my candle casteth not light afar off ; he knoweth all that is done to me, how that when I had but one joy, and no more, and one green flower that I esteemed to be my garland, he came in one hour, and dried up the flower at the root, and took away mine own crown and garland. What can I say ? Surely my guiltiness hath been remembered before him, and he was seeking to take down my sails, and to let my vessel lie on the coast, like an old broken ship that is no more for the sea. But I praise him for this stroke ; I welcome this furnace ; God's wisdom made choice of it for me, and it must be best, because it was his choice. O that I may wait for him until the morning break out ! I know that he will make his light to shine forth again. May I set down my desires, when the Lord biddeth me.*

* S. Rutherford to Marion Macnaught.



PART III.

THE BLESSED RESULTS OF SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION.

1. THERE ARE PECULIAR PRIVILEGES AND BLESSINGS CONNECTED
WITH A SUFFERING CONDITION.
2. AFFLICTIONS SHEW US MORE OF THE HIDDEN EVIL OF OUR OWN
HEARTS.
3. THEY MAKE THE WORD OF GOD MORE PRECIOUS.
4. THEY QUICKEN US TO HOLD CLOSER COMMUNION WITH GOD.
5. THEY CONFORM US TO THE IMAGE OF OUR DIVINE MASTER.
6. THEY WEAN US FROM THE WORLD, AND MAKE US LONG FOR
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Matt. xix. 27. Faith may be a loser *for* Christ, but will not be a loser *by* Christ, and accordingly Christ maketh an answer of faithfulness to this demand of faith. *Verily I say unto you, there is no man,* &c.* But how shall this be made good? why, *with persecution*. Persecution must make up the amount. It is very observable that the year wherein Isaac received his hundredfold, was Isaac's suffering year, the year wherein famine had banished him from his own country to sojourn with Abimelech in Gerar. Gen. xxvi. 1. Isaac's best harvest was in a year of famine, and this was typical to all the children of promise; they must receive Isaac's increase upon Isaac's account a hundredfold, *with persecution*. And I conceive our Saviour may allude to this type in this promise. In persecution the people of God find their hundredfold; when they make a scripture inquiry they find sufferings, especially those for Christ's sake, to be their letters testimonial for heaven, Luke xxi. 13; the pledge of adoption, Heb. xii. 6, 7; a purifier for corruption, Isa. xxvii. 9; the improvement of holiness, Heb. xii. 10; a fining-pot to faith, 1 Peter i. 7; communion with Christ, the presence of the Spirit of God and of glory, 1 Peter iv. 13, 14; the church's treasury, Col. i. 24; weak Christian's strength, strong Christian's confidence, Phil. i. 13, 14; in both, the gospel's advantage, and lastly, the enhancement of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. Here is the hundredfold with advantage. In a word, whatever the affliction be, that it shall be the soul's gain. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. viii. 28. This God teacheth his people; it is the very

* Mark x. 29.

design of the eighth chapter to the Romans, and of the twelve first verses of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, to shew that God's *rod* and God's *love* go both together. And this is a sweet and blessed lesson indeed ! for this quiets the heart and supports the soul under its burden. *For this cause we faint not ; why ? Because though our outward man perisheth, yet the inward man is renewed day by day,* 2 Cor. iv. 16 ; which means that what we lose in our bodies we gain in our souls ; what we lose in our estates, we get in grace. Thus they bear up and comfort themselves in their deepest sorrows, while they that lie poring upon their afflictions, are combining only to sink their own spirits, vex their souls, dishonour God by slighting his dispensation ; and bring up an evil report upon the cross of Jesus Christ. The spiritual privileges of God's suffering people are therefore called the *peaceable fruits of righteousness*, because the taste of this fruit brings in such peace and comfort into the soul, as makes it rejoice not in God only, but in tribulation ; and in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us. Rom. viii. 37.*

To be taught the duties and privileges of a suffering condition is a blessed teaching, for hereby the soul is enabled to taste and see what is good and sweet in every affliction, and is set above all that which is grievous and intolerable to nature ; *for this cause we faint not, &c.* A teaching chastisement is the fruit of God's distinguishing love. A teaching sanctified affliction is the privy seal of special love.

* Case, p. 67.

" My loving kindness will I not take from him—whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth." Heb. xii. 6. That is to say, with a teaching chastisement. When word and rod meet together; when correction, and instruction kiss each other, they are the fruit of paternal affection, and therefore must needs have a blessing bound up in them. *As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord chasteneth thee.* Deut. viii. 5.

A teaching affliction is the purchase of Christ's death and bloodshed. Christ died not to exempt the redeemed from suffering, but to sanctify their sufferings with his own blood. *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.* John xvii. 15. Whatsoever Christ purchased, he prayed for; and this was one main privilege; not freedom from the evil of affliction, but from the evil of sin; *sanctify them through thy truth,* ver. 17. God's teachings are sanctifying teachings.

A teaching affliction is the result of all the offices of Jesus Christ. As a King he chastens, as a Prophet he teacheth, and as a Priest he hath purchased this grace of his Father, that the rod might blossom, that *correction* might be consecrated for *instruction* unto the redeemed. Behold, a sanctified affliction is a cup, whereinto Jesus Christ hath wrung and pressed the juice and virtue of all his mediatorial offices; surely that must be a cup of generous and royal wine, like that in the supper; a cup of blessing to the people of God.*

Our sorest crosses are often made the way to our sweetest comforts.

* Case, p. 112.

Thus a believer cannot reason always, but finds it hard to believe that so it shall be, when the trial is upon him ; but he rests here—the dispensation is not so dark but I see God in it; he works deep ; trace him I cannot, but follow him I will, it is my duty and delight to resign myself to him; I cannot wade in the sea, it is out of my depth, but God can walk there ; the reasons of his dealings I see not, but they are laid in infinite wisdom. I may believe him, trust him, hope in him, though I cannot see him ; he knows his own way, let that suffice.

Wonder not at your trials, be they ever so strange, and grievous, and distressing ; “ all is well ;” some such end is to be answered which you see not. God is in all ; the hand and love of a Father is there. They are to purge from sin, to wean from the world, to bring you to the footstool of God, to shew you that your rest is not here, that it is beyond the grave.

Surely if these be the blessed fruits of affliction, the Christian may well rejoice, and exclaim with the Psalmist, “ It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” Psalm cxix. 71.*

But is the dispensation indeed so mysterious, that I cannot trace, amidst its dark perplexity, the footsteps of a faithful covenant-keeping God ? Is the gloom that overshadows my path, so deep, so dense, that no cheering rays of divine light break through and brighten it, with even the passing gleam of a Saviour’s smile ? Is the storm of affliction so loud and so uninterrupted, that I never hear amidst the pauses of the blast, a voice that softly whispers,

* Hill’s “ It is well.”

“ God is here ? ” Oh, surely I cannot say this. Yea, must I not thankfully acknowledge that even already I have had abundant cause to confess, “ It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; ” and to cherish an humble confidence, that all the blessings, which I have derived from sanctified sorrows, have been but the first fruits of a rich harvest of eternal glory ?

And, oh ! how precious have these first fruits been ! What ineffably sweet communion with my Saviour God have I enjoyed, since he *allured* me into the wilderness, and there spake comfortably to me ! What increased experience of the tenderness of his sympathy, the preciousness of his consolations ! Oh ! should I not have been well satisfied to have passed through even deeper waters of affliction than I have ever encountered, if I could only thus have learned, as this trial has taught me, *how* a Saviour God can and will support his people in their day of trouble ? And what fountains of consolation, sweeter than I ever before tasted, or even in imagination conceived, have prayer and the scriptures proved ; since this afflictive dispensation drove me to seek in them refreshment for my fainting soul ? Moreover, as earth has been darkened, has not heaven looked brighter to my view ? Has not the buffetting of the storm endeared to me the prospect of the haven where I would be ; and the wearisomeness of the journey made sweeter still the thoughts of my heavenly home ? Have not my affections, desires, and hopes, oftener soared up with heavenward flight, since the chains of earthly attractions which bound them down to the dust, have been broken by the hand of affliction ? And shall not I bless the stroke which thus emancipated my earth-enthralled spirit, and gave it liberty

to mount up as on eagle's wings to its native skies?

Has not the furnace of affliction also proved to my soul a purifying furnace, by which the sullying defilements of inward corruption, which lurked unsuspected in the recesses of my heart, were discovered and purged away in its refining fires? So that if, by divine grace, I am enabled in any, even the faintest degree, to reflect my adorable Redeemer's image, I am mainly indebted to the refining process, which has been thus carried on by the Holy Spirit in my soul. And could I wish that the fire had been less hot, if thereby less of the defilement of sin would have been purged away, and less of the image of the Saviour reflected in my soul? And have I not had opportunities of glorifying him who died for me, placed within my reach by this agonizing trial, immeasurably more precious than the most unclouded prosperity could ever have supplied? Oh, if I may but indulge the delightful hope, that some careless sinner has been converted, or some sorrowing saint comforted, by what they have seen of a Saviour's faithfulness and love, as exhibited in the strength and consolation he has so graciously imparted to me, in my time of trial; should I not thank God for the dispensation which, even by the desolation of my dearest earthly hopes, has enabled me to promote the glory of that beloved Saviour God, to whom I am exclusively indebted for the hope full of immortality—the hope of eternal happiness in heaven?

Surely, even these considerations are sufficient to constrain me to cry out to my covenant God, "I know that in very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me;" for, if any shadows of obscurity still hang over

his dispensations, may I not cheerfully wait for the revelations of that bright world, where, in his light, I shall see light poured in full splendour on the entire of the path, by which he led me through the wilderness to his own presence in glory ! Then shall I fully understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, in all his dealings with me here below. Then shall I clearly see (what it is at once my privilege and duty cheerfully to believe) that not a passing cloud has ever darkened my path,—not a single thorn ever pierced my feet, but was appointed by a Saviour's hand in the very tenderness and faithfulness of his love. Then (when the light of heaven is flashed on the scenes of earth) shall I see stamped on this very dispensation in celestial characters the divine inscription—“God is love.” Then shall I perceive how necessary a link it formed in that chain of providential arrangements, by which he was graciously drawing up my heart from the creature to himself, from earth to heaven, and thus making me meet for the everlasting enjoyment of himself; and the very trial which now calls forth my bitterest tears of anguish, will then call forth my sweetest songs of gratitude and joy.*

We must ever bear in mind, that it is not the trial, but the effect of the trial, which must form the subject of our anxiety. It is not, Have you suffered ? or how long or how greatly have you suffered ? But, Has it wrought the work for which it was in mercy sent—the bringing to Christ or the building up in Christ Jesus of your immortal souls ?

* Hugh White.

How many would have pronounced, that the trials and the troubles, the sicknesses and sorrows of the saints on earth, were the *cause* of their being now the saints in heaven. How entirely the misapprehension is corrected (by the passage now before us) I need not tell. It is not, They laboured, they suffered, they agonized on earth, and therefore are they here. But, They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—"THEREFORE are they before the throne of God." In every individual case, then, the affliction had been a sanctified affliction, i.e. in the language of the apostle, the tribulation had worked "patience," patience under God's chastening hand, and "patience, experience," experience of the saving love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and "experience, hope," hope of the salvation which Christ has purchased; the good hope, through grace, of his everlasting kingdom. It was not until this was done, until each had fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel, until each had for himself washed his robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb, that he possessed the smallest title to the inheritance he now enjoys.*

* Blunt's Sermons. "These are they which came out of great tribulation."—Rev. vii. 13—15.

CHAPTER IX.

THEY SHEW US THE HIDDEN EVIL OF OUR OWN HEARTS.

WE now proceed to shew that a believer should welcome affliction from the consideration of the blessings that follow in its train. Among these we would place—

1. *The discovery of unsuspected sin.*

How much unmortified corruption, unhumbed pride—unsubdued opposition to the divine will, when directly thwarting our own. How much secret cleaving, with idolatrous attachment, to some beloved earthly object, often lurks within our soul unconsciously to ourselves, of whose very existence the awakening influence of affliction first makes us aware. This it effects by stirring up the hidden mass of pollution that lay concealed in the deep recesses of our heart, which before appeared so calm and clear, that heaven itself seemed reflected in its bosom ; like the pool that, while undisturbed, appears perfectly pure and pellucid, but as soon as it is stirred, all the muddy sediment which had settled to the bottom,

immediately rises to the surface ; and what looked before so transparent, is now all dark and defiled—the reflection of heaven entirely obliterated, or sadly marred, and clouded, and confused.

Now, this hidden mass of corruption, which thus lay concealed from our view, in the depths of our deceitful heart, was not concealed from the piercing eye of the heart-searching God with whom we have to do. He saw it in its hiding-place, and in mercy to our souls, resolved to discover it to our view, and therefore sent down the angel of affliction to stir the pool, because he knew that the troubling of the waters would be attended with such salutary influences, such healing virtue to our souls.

Yes, hating sin and loving his adopted children in Christ Jesus, as he does, and knowing that sin is the chief hindrance to his people's peace, and that he himself, compatibly with his own character and glory, can only make them happy by making them holy, is it not in the very faithfulness of his love—is it not from the very tenderness of his solicitude for their true happiness, that he sends to them some afflictive dispensation to discover to them the unsuspected sin which has offended the eyes of his purity, and provoked his displeasure as a holy or a jealous God ; that by removing the stumbling-block of our iniquity from before his eyes, he may be enabled once more to lift up upon us the light of his countenance, which our sins had compelled him for a season to withdraw.

Is not this the sweet explanation given us, in that most precious commentary on God's chastening dispensations towards his people, contained in the 12th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, when we are told that our heavenly Father "chasteneth his chil-

dren, not for his own pleasure (for he doth not *willingly* afflict them—is not this a very comforting assurance?) but for their profit, that they might be partakers of his holiness."

Surely, evil as we are, we can yet understand, from our own experience, that he does this in the very overflowings of his love.

Suppose I had a beloved child, in whom I observed some wayward temper, some sinful disposition beginning to be developed—some baneful passion beginning to take root within his soul, whether should I act more truly the part of a fond father if I were to allow the sinful propensity to spread unchecked, with all the misery which I knew must follow in its train; or to chasten and correct my child, and thus eradicate the root of bitterness, before it had attained a growth and strength that would be utterly destructive of the happiness of the child I loved?

How many, if not most of God's chastenings of his children, might this simple analogy explain and even endear.

He sees some sinful passion, unsuspected by us, beginning to usurp a tyrannical control over our spirits; and knowing that, like Satan, it will reign only to ruin, and tyrannize only to torment us, could he be the God of love he is, and allow it to spread its baneful influence unchecked?

He sees some poisonous plant beginning to grow in his garden; shall he leave it there to bring forth fruit unto death, or tear it up by the roots, though in doing so the fibres of the heart, round which it has twined itself, must bleed at every pore?

He detects some plague-spot on the soul, which we cannot see; shall he permit it to spread, till it

has turned the whole of the spiritual frame into a mass of putrefaction, or cut it out, though in doing so, he must inflict on us exquisite agony? Can we hesitate for a second, to say, that frequently that which we think we have cherished, in the most submissive spirit and with a grateful regard to his glory, has, without our knowledge, begun to be substituted as the absorbing object of our affections, anxieties, plans and prospects, for the hope of the gospel. What is to be done? That hope must be blighted: aye, even though our hearts be well nigh broken, to see our darling hope lie withered in the dust. Some object that we fancied we had learned to love safely, within the sober and scriptural limits of subordinate and sanctified affection, has imperceptibly become an idol—usurping that exclusive devotedness of heart, and time of life, which is the unalienable right and prerogative of God, or presuming to divide these with him. What is to be done? That object must be embittered to us, or taken away from us; the idol must be dethroned. Alas! too often death alone can effect its complete dethronement.

Or perhaps the dross of worldliness has begun to incrust and sully the pure gold of the Christian character, so that its lustre is all dimmed, and it scarcely at all, or at best but faintly and brokenly, reflects the Redeemer's image. How shall the fine gold be purified? It must be cast into the furnace of affliction, and the fire must be made hot enough to purge away its dross.

And when the gracious purposes of God's love are accomplished,—when the Achan in the camp, the concealed treasures of hoarded sin, which have provoked the divine displeasure, are discovered and de-

stroyed,—when the hidden chambers of imagery have been diligently searched, with the candle of the Lord, and all their long-neglected and accumulated defilement brought to light and swept away,—when the plague-spot has been cut out and the spiritual system is restored to soundness and to strength,—when the dying hopes of earth, by their decay, have but, as it were, given a brighter bloom to the hope full of immortality ; and it diffuses its celestial tints and fragrance over the whole soul, when the idol has been cast down and God reigns in unrivalled sovereignty on the heart; and there, by his presence, makes that heart a heaven ; when the sullyng dross of worldliness has been purged away, and the Redeemer's image is seen reflected, with beautiful distinctness, in the purified soul—then let the afflictions that have been employed to accomplish such results, be what they may. Yea ! though the furnace has been heated a thousand times hotter, for the purifying process, than it ever before was heated for mortal man, what child of God, feeling within himself such result of his afflictions, would forbear to cry out with David—" It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; " and must not feel how immeasurably he would be a loser, were he to exchange the blessedness that has sprung from his sorrows, for all the happiness which the happiest of the world's votaries has ever known.*

* Hugh White, p. 284.

CHAPTER X.

THEY MAKE THE WORD OF GOD MORE PRECIOUS.

BY correction God brings the children of promise into more perfect acquaintance with the word. He teacheth them out of his law, as here—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." God sent David into the school of affliction, there to learn the statutes of God. By correction the people of God learn, 1st. To converse with the word more abundantly. 2nd. To understand it more clearly. 3rd. To relish it more sweetly.

It is their duty at all times to study the word, to let it dwell in them richly in all wisdom. Col. iii. 16. But what with distractions without and distempers within, the children of God many times grow strangers to their Bibles ; they suffer diversions to interpose between the word and their hearts, and as they pray carelessly, so they read carelessly, and suffer their Bibles to lay by the walls, while they are taken up with other entertainments in the world. And therefore God is forced to deal with them as we do with our children ; to whip them to their books by the rod

of correction—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." When they are cast out by the world then they can run to the word—"Princes did sit and speak against me;" that is, they sat in council to take away his life, that they might condemn him as a traitor unto Saul; and what did he in the meantime? It follows—"But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes." And again—"Princes did persecute me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of thy word."

Again, they learn by affliction to understand the word more clearly. As it was with the disciples in reference to Christ's resurrection, the resurrection of Christ was a lively comment upon the prophecies of Christ—"These things understood not the disciples at the first, but when Jesus was glorified then remembered they these things." John xii. 16. That is, they remembered them savingly, believably; they knew what they meant. So it is with the people of God many times in reference to affliction; the rod expounds the word; providence sometimes interprets the promise. The children of God had never understood some scriptures, had not God sent them into the school of affliction; then they can remember how it is written, and they can bring God's word and God's works together.

Affliction makes them also relish the word more sweetly. In prosperity many times we suffer the luscious contentments of the world so to distemper our palates, that we cannot relish the word; we taste no more sweetness in it than in the yolk of an egg, as Job speaks in another case. But when God hath kept them for weeks, and months, and years, it may be, fasting from the world's dainties; when they are

thoroughly hunger-bitten in the creature ; then " how sweet are thy words unto my taste ; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth." Psalm cxix. 103. The word is never so sweet as when the world is most bitter ; and surely he is a blessed man, who, by affliction, is brought acquainted with his Bible, which is nothing else but a treasury and magazine of blessings. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.*

A child of God cannot but greatly desire a more enlarged and experimental acquaintance with his holy word, and this attainment is greatly promoted by our trials. The far greater part of the promises in scripture are made and suited to a state of affliction, and though we may believe they are true, we cannot so well know their sweetness, power, and suitableness, unless we ourselves are in a state to which they refer. The Lord says, " Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver." Now, till the day of trouble comes, such a promise is like a city of refuge to an Israelite who, not having slain a man, was in no danger of the avenger of blood. He had a privilege near him, of which he knew not the use and value, because he was not in the case for which it was provided. But some can say, I not only believe this promise upon the authority of the speaker, but I can set my seal to it ; I have been in trouble, I took this course for relief, and I was not disappointed. The Lord verily heard and delivered me.†

What new light does affliction seem to breathe into

* Case, p. 32.

† Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 24.

the word of God. How does it make us feel as we never felt before, the unspeakable value of that volume of divine consolation, that storehouse of divine comfort. How many of its most precious promises are, as it were, without meaning or use to us, till sorrow first teaches us to understand and appreciate them aright. What clusters of bright and glorious constellations in the firmament of scriptural truth that were hidden from us by the glare of prosperity's sunshine, become visible in the night of affliction; and shining out amidst its darkness, shed on our souls a sweet and cheering light, that draws up our spirit's gaze from earth to heaven.*

It is not one of the least benefits of severe affliction, that it shatters our confidence in every other stage, and breaks up our hopes from every other quarter, and leads us in simplicity to search the word of God for comfort; nor is it one of the least recommendations of that precious book, that its characters become more bright in proportion as all else around us is dark; and that, when all other information becomes insipid or nauseous, its truths are only rendered more sweet and refreshing by the bitter draught of sorrow. The Bible cannot be known in its excellence, nor its truths relished in their sweetness, nor its promises duly appreciated and enjoyed, until, by adversity, all other consolation is lost, and all other hopes destroyed, but that when we carry it with us to the fiery furnace of affliction, like the aromatic plant, which must be burnt before the precious perfume is felt, it emits a refreshing fragrance, and is

* Hugh White's Meditations, p. 298.

relished in proportion as our sufferings are great. Glorious peculiarity! other books may amuse the hours of ease; other knowledge may suffice to pass the short day of prosperity, but this book only is for the hour of sorrow; this knowledge comes to my aid when all other knowledge fails; and, like the sweet stars of heaven, the truths of God shine most brightly in the darkest night of sorrow.*

. I will shew your ladyship a privilege that others want, and you have; such as are in prosperity and are filled with earthly joys and increased with children and friends; though the word of God is indeed written for their instruction, yet to you who are in trouble, from whom the Lord hath taken many children, and whom he hath otherwise exercised, there are some chapters, some particular promises in the word of God, made in a special manner, which would never have been yours so as they now are, if you had had your portion in the world like others: therefore, all the comforts, promises, and mercies God offereth to the afflicted, are as so many tokens of love to you; take them to you, madam, and claim your right, and be not robbed. It is no small comfort that God hath written some scriptures to you, which he hath not to others: you seem in this rather to be envied than pitied, for you are indeed like people of another world, and those that are above the ordinary rank of mankind, whom our Lord and King hath named beside all the rest, and to whom he hath written comforts and his hearty commendations. Read these, and the like, and think God is like a friend,

* Buchanan's Comfort in Affliction, p. 9.

who sendeth a letter to a whole house and family, but who speaketh in his letter to some by name, that are dearest to him in the house. You are then, madam, amongst the dearest friends of our Lord; and if it were lawful, I would envy you, that God should *so* honour you above many of his dear children. Therefore, your part is in this case (seeing God taketh nothing from you but what he is to supply with his own presence) to beseech your Lord to take his own place in the room of your dead children.*

This is my comfort in my affliction ; for thy word hath quickened me.

David was encouraged to plead the word of promise in prayer, from the recollection of its "comfort" in time "of affliction." Never indeed are the children of God left unsupported in such a time, or called to drink a cup of unmingled tribulation. In the moments of their bitterest sorrow, they are compelled to stand amazed at the tenderness which is daily and hourly exercised towards them. Whatever our affliction may be, we need never be at a loss for some word exactly suited to it; and a "word spoken in due season, how good is it." Prov. xv. 23. One word of God sealed to the heart, infuses more sensible relief than ten thousand words of men; and when the gracious leadings of the Spirit have guided us in the word to an assurance of the presence of God in affliction (Isa. xlivi. 1, 2.) of the continued pity and sympathy of the Lord in his most severe dispensations, (Exodus iii. 7.) and of their certain issue to our everlasting good, (Rom. viii. 28.) must not we

* S. Rutherford to Lady Kenmuir.

y of the word—"This is our comfort in our affliction!" And do not our burdens feel lighter for the support of this word, as the channel in which the Saviour's love streams forth on every side, imparting life, refreshment and strength to those who, but for this comfort, would have "fainted, and perished in their affliction." (v. 92.) This indeed was the end for which the scriptures were written; (Rom. xv. 4.) and such power of consolation have they sometimes ministered to the afflicted saint, that tribulation has almost ceased to be a trial, and the retrospect has been the source of thankful recollection. Only those, however, can apply the comfort of the word, who have felt its quickening power. When dead in sin it quickened us; (James i. 18.) when sunk in trouble it revived us; (ver. 81, 82.) not, however, by any innate power of its own, but by the exhibition of the Saviour, as the spring of life and consolation.*

* Exposition of Psalm CXIX. 50, by the Rev. C. Bridges.

CHAPTER XI.

AFFLICTIONS QUICKEN US TO HOLD CLOSER COMMUNION WITH GOD.

ANOTHER important end of affliction is, that it *quicken* to earnest heart-prayer. Our blessed Saviour in the garden prayed yet more earnestly, until *His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*. And this urgency of prayer was effectual, to obtain the sustaining and strengthening influences which his human nature required. So the afflicted Christian is driven to lay hold of God by prayer; he flies to the bosom of his Saviour where alone he finds true repose, derives strength, and is enabled to maintain that spiritual communion and intercourse with God which is the life of the soul, which is to fit him for heaven, and which distinguishes the true believer from the hypocrite.*

Oh! how many Christians have had reason to acknowledge the blessed effect of affliction in renewing

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 507.

their communion with God, and reviving their decayed devotion! Are there not many who can testify, from their own experience, that while they were prosperous, the spirit of devotion became imperceptibly more languid in their bosoms; that instead of frequently enjoying prayer as a delightful privilege, they were gradually losing their relish for it, and that when they did observe it, it was observed in a cold and formal manner; and that they were not sensible of the length to which they had proceeded in spiritual declension, till, by some severe stroke of affliction, they were thrown on the resources of a piety too decayed to afford them either support or consolation, and were thus, for the first time, apprized of a danger till then unperceived? Can they not remember what deep humiliation, what earnest desires, and what fervent supplications were produced by that affliction, and the discoveries which it enabled them to make? And are they not sensible that it was in prayer they found their consolation, when, with their eyes opened to the reality of their condition, they besought the Lord with tears? Indeed, one of the greatest benefits of severe affliction, in the case of God's people, is, that it awakens them to greater ardour and diligence in prayer; and such is the blessedness of communion with God, and such the elevating and sanctifying effect of earnest prayer, that were affliction productive of no other benefit, this alone might well compensate for all the loss which is sustained, and all the pain which is inflicted, even by the severest dispensations of providence.*

In prayer the mind is brought into immediate con-

* Buchanan's Comfort in Affliction, p. 232.

tact with the supreme will, the sovereignty of God is acknowledged, as well as the wisdom of his dispensations : and the very misery which brings the sufferer to the throne of grace, is the means of placing him in a position in which he feels that he must adore the divine goodness, and trust in it still, notwithstanding all that has occurred, otherwise he has neither help nor hope. By the very act of bending the knee before his footstool, the Christian makes all these acknowledgments, and gives a practical confession of his confidence in God's faithfulness and love; he repairs to God as his friend, and a friend that will never leave him nor forsake him. And if such acknowledgments be made, and such feelings awakened in the hour of prayer, is not his spirit thereby placed in the best condition for at once procuring the mitigation of his sorrow, and improving by the calamity which has called it forth? It is indeed wonderful how the mind clears up its views of God's dispensations while engaged in prayer. At first thick clouds may seem to darken his prospect, but, as he proceeds, streaks of light break through, and shine in upon his spirit; and "while he sits in darkness, the Lord is a light unto him." While David kept silence, "his bones waxed old through his roaring all the day long," while he restrained prayer, his spirit was straitened; but no sooner did he pour out his heart before God, than "he was compassed about with songs of deliverance." In such a case, much sorrow may still remain, but the bitterness of grief is past. The subdued and humble feeling which affliction is designed to produce, and by which it operates, in part, its beneficial results, will characterize the sufferer, long after the agony of grief has subsided into

calm resignation. His soul will no longer resemble the troubled sea which cannot rest, but will be like "a weaned child." And this wholesome conversion of the excitement of violent sorrow into the mild virtue of suffering affliction with patience, is best produced by the agency of prayer.*

In the school of affliction God doth teach us to *pray*. They that never prayed before will pray in affliction : *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.* Isaiah xxvi. 16. They that kept at a distance from God before, yea, that said to the Almighty, Depart from us, in their affliction can bestow a visit upon God. *In trouble have they visited thee*; and they that never prayed before, or did but now and then drop out a sleepy sluggish wish, can now pour out a prayer, when chastisement is upon their loins. Thus, I say, affliction openeth dumb lips, and untieth the strings of the tongue to call upon God.

But when God teacheth in affliction, they learn to pray in another manner ; more frequently, more fervently.

They pray more frequently ;—God's people are vessels full of the spirit of prayer ; and affliction is a piercer whereby God draws it out. "For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer." Psalm cix. 4. David was always a praying man, but now under persecution he did nothing else. *I give myself unto prayer.* As wicked men give themselves up to their wickedness, so David gave himself up to prayer ; he made it his work. Hence you may

* Buchanan's Comfort in Affliction, p. 246.

observe, that most of the Psalms are nothing else, almost, but the runnings out of David's spirit in prayer under variety of afflictions and persecutions. As his troubles were multiplied, so did his prayers multiply. The holy man was never in that condition that he could not pray. Alas! it is sad to consider that in our peace and tranquillity we pray carelessly by fits and starts. Many times we suffer every trifle to come and jostle out prayer; but in affliction God keeps us upon our knees, and as it were tieth the sacrifice to the horns of the altar. And as he teacheth us to pray more frequently, so also to pray more fervently. Even of Christ himself it is said, that being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, more intensely; he prayed until he sweat great drops of blood. Luke xxii. 44.

Truly, Christians, those prayers wherewith you contented yourselves, in the days of your peace and prosperity, will not serve your turn in the hour of temptation. Then you will call to mind your short, sleepy, cold, dead, formal devotions in your families and your closets, and you will be ashamed of them. Then you will see need of praying over all your prayers again, and stir up yourselves to take hold upon God. Isaiah lxiv. 7. Indeed for this very end God sends his people into captivity, that he may draw out the spirit of prayer, which they have suffered to lie dead within them.*

Affliction is recommended to a believer as a means of promoting closer communion with God, and a fuller enjoyment of the happiness that flows directly

* Case on Affliction, p. 30.

from his service and his smile. Even when the hopes of earthly enjoyment are not over-valued, nor the objects of earthly affections idolized, still the drying up of these streams naturally drives the child of God to the fountain of living waters ; and there he drinks more deeply than ever, of a happiness immeasurably superior to the sweetest that has ever flowed into his soul, through the purest earthly channel. Because whatever passes through even the purest, necessarily partakes of the earthliness of the channel through which it comes ; and so is more or less sullied in its course : but what we draw direct from the fountain, untainted by any touch of earth, has all the freshness, purity, and sweetness of celestial joy—of such as angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, “drink from the river of the water of life that flows beside the throne of God.”

How often has it been the experience of God’s dearest children, that when the earthly smile which long had poured the sunshine of gladness round their path, sparkles on that path no more ; and the voice which for years had sounded as the sweetest music to their souls, is heard by them no longer ; then have they learned to walk most rejoicingly in the light of God’s countenance, as it flings its brightest flood of glory round their heavenward path ; and to listen with deepest and most devout joy and thankfulness to the divine accents of God’s voice, as it breathes his own blessed peace over their desolated heart. Oh, yes ! it is when the bosom that for years had been the fond and faithful depository of all their joys and sorrow is mouldering in the dust,—it is then, most of all, that the faithful followers of the Son of God feel what a precious privilege is their’s, in being

allowed, like the beloved disciple of old, to rest their wearied heads on the compassionate bosom of a sympathizing Saviour, and there to feel all their sorrows lulled to sleep, while his own gentle hand tenderly wipes all their tears away.

And they have yet to learn what God *can* do for the happiness of his beloved children even on earth, who have never known him under that most endearing relationship,—the God of *all* comfort, sustaining this office in a manner worthy of his Godhead, coming in all the omnipotence of his love, to support in his own almighty arms the sinking soul, from which its dearest earthly prop has been taken away, and to pour with his own gracious hand the wine and oil of his divine consolations into the bleeding heart, from which the object that was twined most closely round its every fibre has just been torn; and to fill with himself the void left in that heart by the removal of one who had there been treasured up for years, as the sum and substance of its earthly happiness. With what exquisite beauty is this expressed in the prophet Hosea, where God promises, touching his backsliding but still beloved church, *I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her, and she shall sing as in the days of her youth.*

How often does God thus allure his children by the guidance of the angel of affliction, away from the busy world, into the lonely wilderness; that there, far removed from the noise, and bustle, and distractions of earth's ensnaring and bewildering scenes,—there, where amidst the silence of the desert, the slightest whisper of his voice will be distinctly heard, He may speak comfortably unto them. And, oh! how immediately, on his voice of comfort being heard amidst

the solemn stillness that reigns all around, the desert rejoices, and the solitary place is glad ; joy and gladness are heard therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. And the soul, having thus followed the footsteps of her Beloved, when he allured her into the wilderness, and enjoyed sweetest communion with him in its retired solitude, sings there as in the days of her youth, the day of her espousals to Him, whom above all in earth or heaven she loveth.

Or look at another trial—lingering sickness. It is a sore trial to experience, when life is yet in its prime, the consuming anguish of racking pain, or restless feverishness ; of shattered nerves and sinking strength, and weary days and sleepless nights ; to be debarred from all active employment in the service of the Master we love ; deprived of the endearing companionship of those with whom we delighted to *take sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God as friends* ; and denied the privilege of joining with the great congregation in prayer and praise, and seeing our God as we have seen him in the sanctuary.

Yet have we not learned some of the sweetest lessons, and received some of the strongest demonstrations of the loving-kindness of our God, within the curtains of a sick bed ?

Though sleep be banished from the eye-lids, has not our meditation on all the mercies of our God, been sweeter than the sweetest slumber that ever visited our eyes ?

How have the watches of the silent night passed pleasantly away, while we remembered him on our bed, and thought of him while we were waking ! And even when wearied with tossings to and fro, and the wakeful soul still asks the one oft-repeated ques-

tion, *What of the night?* through those restless hours what comfort steals over our harassed feelings, reviving as the gushing drops of the fountain to the parched and thirsty traveller in the desert, while a voice from heaven seems to whisper, *The morning cometh*; that morning to which no night shall ever come; the cloudless morning of an eternal day; and though heaviness may endure for a night, joy cometh on that morning, unmixed, uninterrupted, everlasting joy.

And though it is a trial to pass our Sabbaths in solitude, have not our solitary Sabbaths been often-times our sweetest! Has not Jesus appeared to us in such a glorious and gracious manifestation of his presence; and spoken to us words of such condescending compassion and endearing love, and given us such glimpses of the glory that shall be revealed, that our solitude has become a kind of Patmos to our souls, where we have been favoured with the fullest revelation of a Redeemer's love, the brightest visions of promised glory that we have ever enjoyed? How does affliction also enhance the precious privilege of prayer,—prayer, at all times the most precious privilege of a child of God, but in the time of trouble precious indeed beyond all price! Prayer, which comes in the midnight of our sorrow, when we are tossed on the troubled waters of tribulation, and wearied with fruitless endeavours to reach some place of rest: comes like the Saviour walking on the stormy waves, to dispel all our fears, to calm the tempest of our soul, to breathe around us a heavenly peace, and bring us to the haven where we would be—the sheltering bosom of our God. Is it not well, in a world like this, to be put in possession of a happiness, the

very highest God himself can give, (for he is himself at once its source and its substance,) and which the most desolating of earthly calamities can no otherwise affect than to increase; a happiness which solitude only sweetens, which sickness only enhances, which sorrow only endears, which the death of those we loved most on earth only deepens, and our own death only ushers us into its full, perfect, and everlasting enjoyment? *

Welcome with thankfulness, as a most precious blessing, whatever tends to promote and endear this communion, no matter what else it may deprive you of, or embitter to you. Viewed in this light, what a new and engaging aspect will affliction and death, which otherwise look so stern and repulsive, begin to wear! Is it not God's chief design in visiting you with affliction, to promote this communion with Christ, on which your true happiness depends, by discovering to you the sins, or removing from you the objects, which have proved such fatal hindrances to its enjoyment? And unless you have sadly thwarted God's gracious design, have you not found such to be the blessed result of sanctified sorrow? Have you not been indebted to affliction for many of the sweetest hours of communion with Christ which you have ever enjoyed? When, from the indulgence of sin or slothfulness, the influence of a worldly spirit or idolatrous affections, you have left your first love, and declined in your relish, value and desire, for this divine communion; has it not been the angel of affliction sent on this errand of

* Hugh White's Meditations, p. 292.

mercy by the Holy Spirit, in his gracious office of Comforter, that has recovered you from this back-sliding state, recalled your wandering steps into the paths of peace, and quickened you to seek with renewed ardour him whom your soul loveth? And when you have withdrawn from the world, weeping like Mary at the sepulchre with inconsolable sorrow, because your Lord is taken away from you, and you know not where to find him, has it not been at such moments that Jesus himself has unexpectedly appeared, asking you affectionately—"Why weepest thou?" and once more comforting and gladdening your heart, by the assurances of his love and the consolations of his spirit?

Have not the treachery, the fickleness, or unkindness of the earthly friends you have loved and trusted, endeared to you still more the Friend who never deceives or disappoints; who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; who sticketh closer than a brother, and will "never leave you nor forsake you?" Or if you have never been deceived or disappointed in the objects of earthly love, has not *separation from them drawn you closer to Christ?* Has not the loss of their society given you more of his, and thus even this loss proved an unspeakable gain? Yea, has not even their *death* been blest to you, by enabling you more fully to say—*With me to live is Christ.* Oh! has it not been, after some desolating bereavement, when with an almost breaking heart you have, like Joseph, sought some place to weep, and retired to your chamber to weep there—have you not *then*, most of all, felt the blessedness of having such a Friend and Comforter? for has not Jesus come to you in your solitude, to bind up your broken heart;

to wipe away your tears ; and to whisper in tenderest accents of compassion, *Fear not, it is I.* “ Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid; I am preparing a place for you in heaven, and by these trials I am preparing you for that place.” Is it not then enough to make you in love with affliction, that in its school, under the divine teaching of the Holy Spirit, you have learned so much more than you could otherwise have known, of the sweetness of Christ’s love, the tenderness of his sympathy, the preciousness of his promises, and the richness of his consolations? And look at death in this light, and do you not see a smile passing over the gloomy features of this king of terrors, when you reflect that when he comes to you, he will come to release you from all which has hitherto hindered or marred your enjoyment of fellowship with a Saviour God, and to introduce you into his immediate presence, to see him and speak with him face to face, and enjoy an uninterrupted communion with him, of full, perfect, satisfying bliss, in a world where not a single passing cloud, either of sin or sorrow, shall ever intercept from you the light of his countenance, but you shall bask in the sunshine of his smile for ever. Yes, for ever! an eternity of uninterrupted communion with Christ! Will death usher your emancipated spirit into *that*, and can you shrink from its approach? Should you not rather welcome it, as a messenger of glad and glorious tidings?*

MADAM,

I know you are in grief and heaviness ; and if it

* Hugh White’s Sermons, XV. p. 155, On Communion with Christ.

were not so, you might be afraid, because, then your way would not be so like the way that our Lord saith leadeth to the new Jerusalem. Sure I am, if you knew what were before you, or if you saw some glances of it, you would with gladness pass through the present flood of sorrow, spreading forth your arms out of desire to be at land. If the Lord have given you the earnest of the Spirit, as part of the payment of the principal sum, you ought to rejoice; for the Lord will not lose his earnest, neither will he go back, or repent him of his bargain. If you find, at some time, a longing to see God, joy in the full assurance of that sight, (although that sight be but like the passover, that cometh about only once in the year) peace of conscience, liberty of prayer, the doors of God's treasury opened to the soul, and a dear sight of himself, saying, with a smiling countenance, "Welcome to me, afflicted soul;"—this is the earnest which he giveth sometimes, and which maketh glad the heart; and is an evidence that the bargain will hold. But to the end you may get this earnest, it were good to come often to God, both in prayer and hearing of the word. You must, I say, wait upon him, and be often communing with him, for Christ, who saveth you, is a speaking Christ; the church knoweth him by his voice, and can discern his language amongst a thousand. When the Lord cometh, he speaketh to the heart in the simplicity of the gospel. I have neither tongue nor pen to express to you the happiness of those who are in Christ; and when you have sold all that you have, and bought the field wherein this pearl is, you will think it no bad exchange, for if you be in him, "*all is yours,*" therefore, "*because he liveth, you shall live also.*"

For the Son of God hath said, *Abide in me, and I in you.* O sweet communion, when Christ and we are wholly united. *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; to behold my glory, that thou hast given me.* Amen, dear Jesus, let it be according to thy word ! *

And they feared as they entered into the cloud. Luke ix. 34.

My soul ! here is much instruction for thine evening thoughts to be employed upon. Sit down, and take a leisurely view of the situation of the disciples of Jesus at this hallowed season on the mount. The Lord Jesus was about to manifest to them somewhat of his glory ; but the prelude to it was infinitely solemn,—“ They feared as they entered into the cloud,” though when there, Jesus was going to open to their souls the richest enjoyment of himself. And is it not so with all the sweetest manifestations which the Lord makes to his people ? Seasons of sickness, bereavement, afflictions from the world, disappointments, crosses, and the like ; these are like the cloud to the disciples, as we enter them ; but what gracious events have we found folded up in them, and when opened to our view, how much of Jesus’s love, and grace, and glory have come out of them, which, but for the dispensation, would have been lost. And recollect, my soul, as thou lookest back and tracest the divine hand leading thee through dark and trying providences, in how many cases and in how many instances, though the cloud was frowning as thou didst enter, the most blessed sunshine soon after

* S. Rutherford to Lady Kenmuir.

broke in upon thee. Precious Jesus! choose for me in every circumstance yet remaining to be accomplished. I know not what is in thy sovereign appointments concerning me; but sure I am, that both love and wisdom are at the bottom of all. Give me grace to enter into the cloud, be it what it may, without fear, because I know Jesus is with me; and though, in this my day, it be neither clear nor dark, yet well I know all shall be well in thee and from thee; and "at evening time it shall be light."*

* Hawker's Evening Portion.

CHAPTER XII.

THEY CONFORM US TO THE IMAGE OF OUR DIVINE MASTER.

He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. Mal. iii. 3.

It is most consolatory for the believer to know that, when God's dispensations towards him wear a gloomy and portentous aspect, he has One at God's right hand who can be touched with a feeling for his infirmity—to know, in the deep valley of suffering and affliction, that he has a sympathizing Friend above, one whose compassionate regards are ever directed towards him, one whose every emotion is as lively and as tender as when he wept at the grave of Lazarus, or committed his bereaved mother to the care of the disciple whom he loved. Oh, who can describe the blessedness of realizing the presence and sympathy of this gracious being! At those dark hours of sorrow, when the stricken soul mourns with a bitterness which itself alone can know, when, like the ship suddenly driven against the sunken rock, every power of the soul recoils, every feeling is rent and riven, and every emotion is quivering with the

shock,—then, truly it is sweet, inexpressibly, unutterably sweet,—to lift the tearful eye, and see Jesus in the midst of the foaming surge, and the raging tempest,—then, what harmony can equal, what melody can transcend in sweetness, those words of mercy which cause themselves to be heard above all the din and the turmoil of affliction's rudest storms—“ Fear not, for I am *with thee*: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will help thee, yea, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

But while it is most comforting for the Christian to know that his Redeemer God is a “ very present help to him in time of trouble,” and to feel sensibly the joy of catching some gleams of the “ light of his countenance ” amid the otherwise cheerless night of trial; and thus experimentally to understand what St. Paul means when he speaks of “ sorrowful, yet *always rejoicing*,” or St. James, when he says “ Count it *all joy* when ye fall into divers temptations ; ” still ought there to be an increased and enlarged consolation in all his affliction, when he thinks not only of his present fellowship with his beloved Master in the vale of sorrow, but when he looks beyond the hour of trial, and with the strong assurance of faith, is convinced that the wound and the scourge which now cause his anguish, are to issue, under the grace of God’s Holy Spirit, in a greater, and purer, and closer conformity of his life and spirit to his divine Saviour.

That this is the result aimed at by him who chastens him, he cannot doubt. He is the fruitful branch of the true Vine, and what then must be the treatment of the husbandman? *He purgeth it*, and for this purpose—“ that it may bring forth *more fruit*.”

Whatever is luxuriant and worthless, he prunes and cuts away ; whatever is being drawn out in useless tendrils, or in foliage so thick as to exclude the sun's ray from the ripening fruit; all this rank increase, he checks and discourages, not that there may not be a putting forth of fresh vigour and life, but that such vigour and such life may be of a holy and heavenly character; that it may be drawn and framed from the great source of true fruitfulness, and that his growth may be, as the apostle expresses it, "in grace ; until he come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God; unto a perfect man ; to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Is then the believer suffering affliction ? Let him remember that his wise and loving Father is visiting "*his offences* with the rod, and his sins with scourges," that it is not his child, but the wickedness, the worldliness, the frowardness, the backsliding of his child that he is visiting. The secret sins, and the cherished sins, and the sins of careless habit, or of criminal conformity to the wishes or the ways of others, must be rudely and roughly torn away, or we should never part with them. Therefore the "briers and the thorns of the wilderness" must teach us ; must so afflict us and wound us, that we shall be ready to part with every thing which displeases and offends God, in order that we may resemble more and more "the brightness of his glory," which he hath caused to shine upon us in the face of Jesus Christ.

The three children of God, who were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace in Babylon, came out in a different condition from that in which they were when they were consigned to the scorching flames. They went in bound hand and foot together;

they came out without indeed a hair of their head consumed, neither the smell of fire on their garments, but *their bonds were consumed*. They were helpless and unable to move, when cast in; but the raging fire set them at liberty, and they walked forth, unencumbered and free. So with the believer,—the furnace of affliction is prepared for him, when he is “tied and bound with the chain” of some besetting sins and frailties; that those things which impede his progress in the divine life, that all which retards his treading *freely* in the steps of his master, may be, as it were, scorched away; that, in fact, through the heat of trial, he may be separated from all that is carnal, earthly, sensual and devilish, and more closely united to all that is spiritual, and heavenly, and pure, and Godlike; that the image of the earthly may be more effaced, and the image of the heavenly more manifest in his daily walk and conversation.

Thus too, in the passage quoted at the head of these remarks, God is represented sitting as a refiner and purifier of silver; watching the process which his eternal wisdom and infinite love has arranged for the welfare of his children. He causes them to pass through tribulation, as the refiner causes the silver to be placed in the furnace, that the dross and baser matter may be all separated, and that a pure and valuable metal may be brought out; and his time for taking out of the furnace of trial is indicated by the same circumstance that guides the purifier of silver; for *as soon as he sees his image reflected* in his child, he removes him from all his trouble and his distress.

How, then, ought these considerations to sweeten trial, and to make us thankful for the sharp and the painful dispensations, through which we may be

called upon to pass. How ought this to make us welcome the thorns which wound our feet, if the pain they inflict is graciously sent to warn us that we are out of the way. How ought every additional blow, as it descends, to bear the impress in our heaven-raised eye, of one who "chastises, not for his pleasure, but for our profit;" and be hailed by us as another impulse imparted to us in our Zion-ward course, as an additional means of approximation to that one glorious end and hope of the believer's soul—not only to see Jesus face to face in glory, but to be "like him."

Child of affliction, if you are mourning in Zion, happy, blessed is your lot. The joy of escape is not only before you; the blessedness of the dawn after the night, is not only in prospect; the rising of the sun in brilliancy and fervid warmth, after the brooding storms of affliction and of sorrow, is not only your delightful anticipation;—the expectation of greater holiness, more entire devotedness to the will of God, more zeal, more love, more consistency in his service, is justly and properly yours: the confidence that the result of the trial will be to make you live less to yourself and more to Christ, is truly your own in suffering. And thus may you buoyantly ride upon the wildest tossings, the most threatening billows of this troublous world, with the happy confidence, that "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold which perisheth though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Bow then, not only with cheerful resignation, but with holy, heavenly joy, to all the afflictive dispensations of your covenant God. And as the holy proto-

martyr Stephen welcomed the stones which bruised and lacerated his sinking body, because he knew they were hastening his departure to eternal and entire *conformity with Christ*, in the presence of Christ; so do you welcome every trial, painful, bereaving though it be, as a messenger of love, directing you what you must put off, and leading you to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ."*

* Rev. D. T. K. Drummond.

CHAPTER XIII.

THEY WEAN US FROM THE WORLD, AND MAKE US LONG
FOR HEAVEN.

The last lesson which God teacheth us by affliction is, how to prize and long for heaven. In our prosperity, when the candle of God shines in our tabernacles, when we wash our steps in butter, and the rock poureth us out rivers of oil, Job xxix. 6, we could sit down with the present world, and even say with the disciples, though not upon so good an account, *It is good for us to be here.* While life is sweet, death is bitter, and heaven itself is no temptation while the world gives us her friendly entertainments. But when reproach and persecution, sickness and sore diseases do not only pinch but vex our hearts with variety of aggravations, we are not so fond of the creature, but we can be content to entertain a parley with death, and take heaven into our consideration. Not that merely to desire to be in heaven, because we are weary of the world, is an argument of grace, or a lesson that needs divine teaching ; self-love will prompt as much as that comes to,—but be-

cause, like foolish travellers, we love our way, though it be troublesome, better than our home! God by this discipline taketh off our hearts by degrees from this present world, and maketh us look homeward: being burdened, we groan, 2 Cor. v. 4; and with the dove we return to the ark when the world is afloat around us. When David was driven from his palace, then, "Woe is me, that my pilgrimage is prolonged," so the Septuagint renders it. We should be contented, like the Israelites, with the garlick and flesh-pots of Egypt, if God did not set cruel task-masters over us to double our burdens. When God hath thus lessened our esteem of the world, he discovers to us the excellency of heavenly comforts, and draws out the desires of the soul to a full fruition? Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Affliction puts heaven into all those notions which make it heaven indeed.

To the weary it is rest, Isaiah lvii. 2. Rev. xiv. 13. To the banished it is home. 2 Cor. v. 6. To the scorned and reproached it is glory, Rom. v. 2. To the captive it is liberty, Rom. viii. 21. To the conflicting soul it is conquest, Rom. viii. 37. And to the conqueror it is a crown of life, Rev. ii. 10. Righteousness, 2 Tim. iv. 8. Glory, 1 Peter v. 4. To the hungry it is hidden manna, Rev. ii. 17. To the thirsty it is the fountain and waters of life, and rivers of pleasure, Rev. xxii. 17; Psalm xxxvi. 8, 9. To the grieved soul, whether with sin or sorrow, it is fulness of joy; and to the mourner it is pleasure for evermore, Psalm xvi. 11.

Surely, beloved, heaven thus proportioned to every state of the afflicted soul, cannot fail to be very precious, and will make the soul, with a stronger or weaker impulse, desire to be dissolved, and to be

with Christ, which is better than all, Phil. i. 23. A Christian indeed is comforted by faith, but not satisfied; or if satisfied, it is in point of security, not of desire: because here we are absent from the Lord, and walk by faith, not by sight, 2 Cor. v. 6, 7. Hope, though it keep life in the soul, yet it is not able to fill it: he longs, and thinks every day a year, till he be at home in his Father's arms, and sitting down on his Father's throne, crowned with his Father's honour and glory. They that walk by faith cannot be quiet till they be in the sight of those things which they believe. Jacob, when he heard that Joseph was alive, though he did not believe it, yet could not be satisfied with hearing of it; but saith he, *I will go and see him before I die.* So the believing soul—He whom my soul loveth was dead and is alive, and behold he liveth for evermore, Rev. i. 18. I will die that I may go and see him; as Augustine, upon that answer of God to Moses, *Thou canst not see my face and live,* makes this quick and sweet reply, ‘Then, Lord, let me die, that I may see thy face.’*

By these things (that is by afflictions) we are made more willing to leave the present world, to which we are prone to cleave too closely in our hearts, when our faith is smooth. Had Israel enjoyed their former peace and prosperity in Egypt, when Moses came to invite them to Canaan, I think they would hardly have listened to him. But the Lord suffered them to be brought into great trouble and bondage, and then the news of deliverance was more welcome; yet still they were but half willing, and they carried a love to

* Case, 75.

the flesh-pots of Egypt with them into the wilderness. We are like them ; though we say this world is vain and sinful, we are too fond of it ; and though we hope for true happiness only in heaven, we are often well content to stay longer here. But the Lord sends afflictions one after another, to quicken our desires, and to convince us that this cannot be our rest. Sometimes if you drive a bird from one branch of a tree, he will hop to another a little higher, and from thence to a third ; but if you continue to disturb him, he will at last take wing and fly quite away ; thus we, when we are forced from one creature comfort, perch upon another, and so on ; but the Lord mercifully follows us with trials, and will not let us rest upon any : by degrees our desires take a nobler flight, and can be satisfied with nothing short of himself, and we say, " To depart and be with Christ is best of all." *

When is it that the thoughts of the poor tired traveller turn most frequently and fondly to his house ? Is it not when the night is dark, and the wind howling, and the rain descending in torrents, and he feels all the fury of the pitiless storm ? How does he then delight to think of the beloved ones that are looking out for his return, and of the fond welcome that will greet him on his arrival at his own dear home ; and how does he forget for a while, all the pains and perils of his journey, in the anticipation of the happiness he will feel, when he sees around him the smiling countenances, and is folded in the fond embraces, of the beloved objects of that happy home.

Christian pilgrim ! a more joyful meeting is re-

* Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 310.

served for thee ; a happier family is looking out for, and will rejoice at, thine arrival ; a tenderer Father will fold thee in his arms, and a dearer Friend will welcome thee to thine eternal rest, when thou hast finished thy wanderings in the wilderness, and reached thy home in heaven, than ever welcomed the wearied traveller on his return to earth's happiest home.

Now does not the storm of affliction turn thy thoughts more frequently and fondly to that promised home beyond the skies ?

Is it not when the world wears most of its wilderness aspect, that thine heart most loves and longs for its eternal rest ?

Was it not when the dove could find no resting-place for the sole of her foot in a deluged world, that she thought of returning to the ark ? And is it not ever thus with ourselves, that when we can find no resting-place for our wearied souls on earth, because the deep floods of affliction have covered every spot where our hearts once delighted to dwell, is it not then that our desires and affections take unto themselves, as it were, the wings of a dove, and flee away into heaven, the true ark of everlasting peace, and are there at rest ?

How know we but that if the floods were dried up, and the earth again looked green, and our favourite haunts, where we used so to love to linger and waste our hours in play, were again within our reach, —how know we but that, like the dove, we should be content to remain there, and return to the ark no more ? And may not this be the very reason why with so many of God's beloved children the deep water-floods of affliction are never assuaged, even because He knows that thus alone can their desires and affections—so

sadly prone to seek their rest on earth—be kept safely lodged within the heavenly ark. And should we not rejoice to be drawn by the deluge into that ark, and kept there in peace and safety, rather than be allowed to wander at our will through the world, and so be at last overtaken by that second deluge—that coming flood of fire which shall at last destroy the world, and all who have treasured up their afflictions, and are seeking their rest and happiness therein? Now if we glance at some of the chief afflictions with which we are liable to be visited, we shall see that they all have a direct tendency to draw our thoughts and desires heavenwards; and the more there is of heaven in our tempers, conversation, and character, is not heavenly meditation calculated to produce heavenly-mindedness?

Are our bodies tortured with agonizing pains, or consumed with slow wasting disease? How does this lead us to look forward with joyful anticipation to the time when we shall be dwellers in a land where no “inhabitant shall ever say, I am sick;” where our glorified bodies, made like unto the Redeemer’s, suitable residences for the glorified spirits that shall inhabit them, shall exult in the conscious possession of undecaying health and immortal strength for ever.

Have our possessions been taken from us by fraud or force? Have our riches made unto themselves wings, and flown away; and has the chilling blight of poverty, with all its attendant train of trials fallen upon us? How do we then, if enriched with the unsearchable riches of Christ, rejoice to remember that there are laid up for us, *treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*”—possessions, which being

in God's custody, are everlastingly secure, *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

Are we separated from those we love, by some impassable barrier, our spirits no longer gladdened in joy, or comforted in sorrow by their fond and endearing sympathy? Or is even a bitterer trial appointed unto us? Are our hearts wounded by the unkindness and treachery of those we have loved and confided in? Has mistake or misrepresentation separated souls that once seemed knit together? And do we see with inexpressible anguish the chilling look of alienated affection, on the countenance that was once lit up, at our approach with its fondest smiles?

Oh! how consolatory then to remember that there is a world, where separation and sorrow shall never come—a land which “no enemy enters, and from which no friend ever departs;” where all that love in Christ shall spend an eternity of happiness together, glowing with an ardour of affection, that shall never be for one moment changed or chilled, but being continually fed with fresh supplies of strength drawn direct from the divine source of all pure love, shall burn with ever-increasing warmth through everlasting ages?

Or has death entered our habitations and carried away one after another of our loved ones, with whom we set out on the journey of life? And are we constrained to feel that we do indeed dwell in the land of the shadow of death. As we look round the narrow circle, and think how link after link has been broken off the chain, which has long bound our affections perhaps too closely to earth,—shall we not

lift up our hearts in thankfulness to God even for this trial, if the links, thus broken off the chain of earthly affection, have been added to the chain of divine love, by which God is drawing up our hearts to himself and heaven? And if heaven thus becomes more endeared to us, as the dwelling-place of so many that our hearts still love as fondly as ever—the depository where so many of our most precious treasures are laid up, and if from our thoughts and affections being thus attracted heavenward, our character begins to assume a more heavenly cast and our conversation a more heavenly tone, and our very features a more heavenly expression; ought we not indeed to bless God for even these desolating visitations, if death itself thus becomes a remembrancer of heaven, and calls away our affections from a world of dying friends, and dying hopes, and dying happiness, to one, "where there shall be no more death,"—one whose very atmosphere is so impregnated with the spirit of immortality, that whatever once breathes its air can never die; but all its affections and hopes and joys, and its inhabitants are, like its God, everlasting.

Thus living with the prospect of the celestial city ever in our sight, catching each day a nearer view of its glories, and hearing with increasing distinctness the sound of the harpers on its walls, harping on their harps, and the strains of the music that floats around the throne; have we not abundant reason to rejoice in tribulation, if, through the instrumentality of sanctified affliction, we acquire more and more of that holy abstractedness from earthly entanglements and cares, and preparedness for celestial occupations and enjoyments, which should ever characterize

those who feel themselves to be pilgrims and strangers upon earth, seeking a better country, that is a heavenly.*

No words are strong enough to paint the proneness there is in the very heirs of salvation to set up resting places here upon earth. And though they are delivered from the base and sordid love of money, or the poor gratifications which can be gleaned from the honour and pleasures of the world, still they are apt to make Christian friends and relations their idols; and so the strength of their affections, which should centre and settle *all* in God, is by this means very much weakened and divided. Though we discern not this ourselves, nor suspect it, our Divine Physician fully sees the growth of the distemper; and in love we are separated from our idols. Disappointments meet us at every turn; where we expected we should be particularly favoured with helps and advantages for godly living, we behold ourselves left destitute; so that we have no more a place of refuge upon earth, no more a dear counsellor or friend who is as our own soul. By this means we are compelled, as Noah's dove was by the wide watery waste, which did not afford a single resting-place, to fly to the ark, and to take shelter there. Our gracious Father, with a loving jealousy over us, thus secures our whole love to himself, and appears altogether glorious in our eyes; as the fountain of living waters, when the cisterns are broken which we were hewing out for ourselves.†

God seldom gives his people so sweet a foretaste of

* Hugh White's Meditations, p. 305.

† Venn's Letters.

their future rest, as in their deep afflictions. keeps his most precious cordials for the time of greatest faintings and dangers. He gives them where he knows they are needed, and will be valued; where he is sure to be thanked for them, and people rejoiced by them. Especially where our sufferings are more directly for his cause, then his kingdom fails to sweeten the bitter cup. The martyrs have possessed the highest joys. When did Christ preach such comfort to his disciples, as when their hearts were sorrowful at his departure! O my soul look above this world of sorrows! Hast thou so long felt the smarting rod of affliction, and no better understood its meaning? Is not every stroke to drudge thee hence? Is not its voice like that to Elijah? What doest thou here? Dost thou forget thy Lord's prediction, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace?" Oh! my dear Lord, I know thy meaning; it is written in thy flesh, engraved in thy bones. My heart thou aimest at; thy rod driveth thy silken cord of love draws; and all to bring it to thyself. Lord! can such a heart be worth thy having? Make it worthy, and then it is thine: take it to thyself, and then take me. This clod hath life to sleep, but not to rise. As the feeble child to the tender mother, it looketh up to thee, and stretcheth out its hand, and fain would have thee take it up. Can the prospect of glory make others welcome the cross, and even refuse deliverance, and cannot it make thee, my soul! cheerful under lesser sufferings? Can it sweeten the flames of martyrdom, and not sweeten thy life, or thy sickness, or thy natural death?

Should God suffer you to take up your rest here, it is one of the greatest curses that could befall you.

It were better never to have a day of ease in the world; for then weariness might make you seek after true rest. We are like little children strayed from home, and God is now fetching us home, and we are ready to turn into any house, stay and play with every thing in our way, and sit down on every green bank, and much ado there is to get us home.

O Christian, follow thy work, look to thy dangers, hold on to the end, win the field and come off the ground, before thou thinkest of a settled rest. Whenever thou talkest of rest on earth, it is like Peter on the Mount, thou "knowest not what thou sayest." *

* Baxter's "Saint's Rest."

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PART IV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMFORT UNDER SORROW OF EVERY KIND.

1. THE CHRISTIAN'S COMFORT UNDER POVERTY, PERSECUTION, &c.
2. UNDER THE LOSS OF UNGODLY RELATIVES AND FRIENDS.
3. UNDER THE LOSS OF FRIENDS.
4. THE RECOGNITION OF GLORIFIED SAINTS IN HEAVEN.
5. CHRISTIAN CONSOLATION.
6. THE LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.
7. THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.
8. THE PROMISED GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST AS A COMFORTER.
9. THE PROSPECT OF FUTURE GLORY.
10. THE PROSPECT OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING TO TAKE US
UNTO HIMSELF.



PART IV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMFORT UNDER SORROW OF EVERY KIND.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMFORT UNDER POVERTY, PER- SECUTION, BODILY PAIN AND SICKNESS, AND SPI- RITUAL DEPRESSION.

UNDER POVERTY.

Sam. ii. 7. 2 Cor. vi. 10. James ii. 5. Rev. iii. 19.

I address some among you, perhaps, who are indeed long the true followers of our Lord and Saviour sus Christ, and, poor and destitute though ye be, e yet the children of the King of Kings, and the doubted objects of his compassion, and considera-
n, and love. Now when you read such declara-
ns as those of the Psalmist, "I have been young
d now am old, and yet saw I never the righteous

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forsaken, and his seed begging their bread," Psalm xxxvii. 25, the effect upon your minds may be—I believe to some it has been—rather of a painful than an encouraging nature. You may reasonably feel, if this be true, I fear I have little share in the covenant, for I have often needed not only the luxuries and comforts of life, but even bread itself.

However opposed, then, the opinion may be to the sentiment of many religious persons in the present day, we confess that we do not believe such declarations of freedom from temporal need and temporal misery, to belong to the dispensation under which we live. So far from it, that the very want of the good things of this world, which would hinder you in your course to heaven, is a part of the promise: it is positively a part of your portion not to have those things, the possession of which, God, in your particular case, sees must be prejudicial to you. Therefore be assured, and let not your hearts be troubled, while I tell you, if poverty be good for you, you shall have it; if contracted circumstances and evil report shall help you toward heaven, you shall not be without them. There is not, in fact, a greater mistake than believing that God's dearest children do not share, and share largely, in the troubles and sorrows, the poverty and necessities of earth, for "if in this life only we have hope in Christ," said a poor and afflicted disciple, "we are of all men most miserable."

The Christian's joy, therefore, with regard to "things present" is this—that he has precisely that allotment which comes proportioned by a Father's wisdom, and accompanied by the blessing of a Father's love; and this to the grateful heart of a true child of God, is better, infinitely better, than all the

surfeiting abundance of him who could cry, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry."*

Art thou pinched with poverty? A believer, but in distressed circumstances? Blessed art thou of the Lord! Hearken, my beloved brother; hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom? What a mercy is it for thee thus to have thine outward estate appointed for thee by the choice of thy Heavenly Father! And the same estate he chose for his best beloved. In the exceeding riches of his love he decreed that thou shouldst be poor in the world, as Jesus was. He knew it was best for thee, and he chose thee rich in faith. O how good is thy God! He sent thee poverty to enrich thee. It is to bring thee near to God, to keep thee near to him, and to afford thee daily proofs of his precious love. Be content then, thy God will supply all thy need.†

When persons have been like myself reduced in life, and brought to a state of dependance, it is very common to hear one and another say, with a tone of pity, "Ah, I knew her in her better days. I remember so and so, in her *better days*." Nor is there any impropriety in the expression, in their sense of it. But this I know by experience, that the days of worldly ease and prosperity are seldom to Christians their *better days*. So far from it, that to the praise and glory of his name would I speak it, I have substantial reasons to call *these* my better days. These

* Blunt's Sermons.

† Romaine.

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days and nights of pain—these days in which I am visited with an incurable disorder—these days of frequent anxiety from a variety of quarters ; these days of almost absolute confinement and solitude, are not only my better, but my *best* days, because the Saviour condescends to be more present with me in them—to manifest himself unto me, as he does not unto the world, to stand by my bed of affliction, and speak kindly to my heart ; because I am taught by affliction, and enabled by grace, to cultivate the life of faith, which is as superior to the life of sense as the heavens are higher than the earth, and that, even in so very small a measure as I have known it.*

UNDER PERSECUTION.

John xv. 20. 2 Cor. iv. 9.

WELL BELOVED AND DEAR SISTER,

My love, in the Lord Jesus Christ remembered, I understand that you are still under the Lord's visitation, in your former business with your enemies, which is God's dealing : for, till he take his children out of the furnace, that knoweth how long they should be tried, there is no deliverance : but that the sea of trouble is gone over the souls of his children, then comes the gracious long-hoped-for ebbing, and drying up of the waters. Dear sister, do not faint; the wicked may hold the bitter cup to your head, but God mixeth it, and there is no poison in it; they strike, but God moves the rod ; Shimei curseth, but

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 254.

it is because the Lord bids him. I tell you, and I have it from him before whom I stand for God's people, that your present troubles shall be dispersed, as the morning cloud, and God shall bring forth your righteousness as the light at the noon-tide of the day. Your master is now as the king that is gone to a far country ; God seems to be from home (if I may so say) yet he seeth the bad servant, who says, Our master deferreth his coming, and so strikes his fellow servants. But patience, my beloved, Christ the King is coming home ; the evening is at hand, and he will ask an account of his servants. Make a fair clear count to him. So carry yourself, as that at night you may say, Master, I have wronged none : behold you have your own with advantage. O ! your soul then will esteem much the testimony of a good conscience. And thrice happy shall your soul be then, when God finds you covered with nothing but the white robe of the saint's innocence, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Put on love, and brotherly kindness, and long-suffering; wait as long upon the favour and turned hearts of your enemies as Christ waited for you, and as Jesus stood at your soul's door; "be angry but sin not;" I persuade myself that holy unction within you, which teacheth you all things, is also saying, "Overcome evil with good."

Keep God's covenant in your trials ; hold you by his blessed word, and sin not; flee anger, wrath, grudging, envying, fretting ; forgive an hundred pence to your fellow-servant, because your Lord hath forgiven you ten thousand talents ; for I assure you by the Lord, your adversaries shall get no advantage against you except you sin, and offend your Lord in your sufferings ; but the way to overcome is by pa-

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tience, forgiving and praying for your enemies, in doing whereof you heap coals upon their heads, and your Lord shall open a door to you in your trouble: wait upon him, as the night-watch waiteth for the morning; he will not tarry, go up to your watch-tower, and come not down, but by prayer, and faith, and hope, wait on; when the sea is full, it will ebb again; and so soon as the wicked are come to the top of their pride, and are waxed high and mighty, then is their change approaching; they that believe make not haste. Now again, I trust in your Lord, you shall by faith sustain yourself and comfort yourself in the Lord, and be strong in his power; for you are in the beaten and common way to heaven, when you are under the Lord's crosses; you have reason to rejoice in it, more than in a crown of gold, and rejoice and be glad to bear the reproaches of Christ.*

UNDER BODILY SUFFERING.

Psalm xli. 3. Isaiah xxxiii. 24. Rev. xxii. 4.

Pain, sickness and extreme feebleness are my allotted companions. However unlovely and irksome such companions must be, yet, so far as they shall prove salutary to my soul, I welcome them. I need correction; I need purification, and the rod of affliction has not yet done its appointed work. I pray that I may not shrink from it. Why should I? seeing it is in my Saviour's hand, who does not chastise as earthly parents often do, passionately, excessively

* S. Rutherford to Marion Macnaught.

and unwiseley. He corrects tenderly; *In measure when it shooteth forth he debateth with it.* I rejoice that the chastening rod is in his hand and not in the hand of man. I pray him to support me under it; I trust I do really and cheerfully submit myself to it. He once gave his back to the smiters for our sins; how much more should I submit to be smitten by him, for my own sins! Why should I, who deserve to be destroyed, complain when only chastised? I will hope, and pray, and believe, that when the rod has done its work it will be laid aside.*

If we may but receive more of the divine image, and be able in any degree to glorify that holy and gracious name by which we are called, it is worth all that we can suffer, for the *time is short.* The flesh naturally cries out Spare, spare! and the Lord has pity on such a cry; but he will perform his own work, for as one says—"He loves us too well to spare us for our crying, if it be to our loss, and it is mercy that he does so. Discipline is wholesome, and he will correct in mercy.

But our danger lies in having the pain without the profit; in going through our trials and afflictions as a sort of allotted calamity common to all, instead of considering them as a medicinal process, appointed for a certain purpose. We do not sufficiently watch symptoms, either of our disease or our remedy; we do not, as we ought, deliver ourselves up and fall heartily into the designs of our great Physician, therefore we lose much. I wish to encourage you and myself to expect great things from the school

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, page 301.

we are likely to remain in, as long as we inhabit our clay tabernacles, and when we are *clothed upon with our house eternal in the heavens*, we shall sing a louder song of praise. Yet I know, and feel, that the heart sinks under suffering ; and nothing but constant and new supplies of divine grace can enable us to hold up our heads ; for these we must constantly pray ; and a supply of these we may assuredly expect.*

Perhaps thou art tried with bodily pain and sickness : these are hard trials. To endure them is the very crown of patience ; but strength to endure them is promised, and in waiting upon the Lord will be received ; so that outward pains shall produce inward joy. Thus we read—*The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.* He is weak, God strengthens him ; he is sick, God comforts him ; he is in pain, God smooths his bed, and he lies patient. Sickness cannot be pleasant in itself ; but is profitable for its fruit. It is the appointment of God, and teaches submission to his sovereign will. It comes to the believer with a message of precious love. This bitter cup is sent from thy heavenly Father, who has many gracious purposes to answer by thy taking it. He would humble thee and let thee feel what thou art, and what thou deservest ; he would mortify the life of sense ; he would give occasion to increase faith and to advance patience. Drink it up ! there is a rich cordial at the bottom ; the taste of it will draw out thy heart in love to God. Happy sickness ! which promotes spiritual health ! Blessed pain !

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 307.

which the kind Physician often makes the way to pleasure, yea, to the sweetest communications of his love.*

In the Memoir of Mary Jane Graham, by the Rev. C. Bridges, he thus speaks of her experience under bodily pain and sickness:—‘The support which was vouchsafed to her under her intense bodily sufferings, was such as might have been expected from the honour and tried faithfulness of her God. Such was her enjoyment at some seasons of agony, that her pains, as she said on one occasion, ‘were sweeter than honey or the honey-comb.’ At one of her times of distress she remarked—‘I am a child lying in the arms of Christ, and he treats me with more than a mother’s tenderness.’ Truly, indeed, was she strengthened with all might, according to the glorious power of God, unto all patience and long-suffering with *joyfulness*.

In a letter to a friend on this same subject, she says, speaking of Christians, ‘believe me, they have not *one* pain too many. Not that they love pain, or are not glad to be freed from it, when the Lord pleases. But they know that every one of their sufferings is necessary and good for them, and that they come from the hand of a kind and tender Father. They are willing to bear as much pain as his love sees fit to inflict. Their pains are very sweet to them as they come from him. And, O dearest —, could you know how he strengthens them upon a bed of languishing, and how he makes all their bed in their sickness, you would almost envy them even

* Romaine.

their pains, sweetened as they are by *the peace of God which passeth all understanding.*

UNDER SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION.

Psalm lxxvii. 7—10. Isaiah i. 18. Isaiah liv. 7, 8.

DEAR MADAM,

Being informed of your continued infirmity and affliction, I wish to express in a few lines the concern I entertain for your support, consolation and deliverance. I know that in a long night of trial, when the cheering light of the morning of spiritual gladness seems to be long waited for in vain, the heart is ready to become sick, and overwhelmed with its own reasonings; to say, Why am I thus? is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Can such a way of dealing be consistent with a state of reconciliation and of special favour? Many pages might be filled up with the multitude of thoughts and enquiries, which are ready in such a condition to fight in the weary soul. But let me entreat you to remember, that one word of power from the throne of Jesus Christ, one beam of light from his glorious countenance, will be sufficient to drive back whole armies of doubts, fears and perplexities, and to kindle darkness into day. Who can describe the amiable grace and energy wherewith, in the days of his flesh, Jesus addressed, with his own voice, words of consolation and of eternal life, suitable to the situation of the afflicted objects of his love; saying to one, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" to another, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go

in peace ;” to a third, “ Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God ? ” to another, “ O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? ” and to another, ready to faint under seeming unkindness, “ O woman, great is thy faith ! be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” We are not indeed warranted to seek extraordinary voices ; but neither are we to imagine that, by ascending into the heavenly sanctuary, Jesus hath lost the power of conversing with the souls that seek his fellowship, so as to give them an infallible certainty that the voice is his, and that it is the voice of all-conquering, unchangeable love. I will therefore beseech you to continue, in the face of delays and discouragements, to put your case into the hands of this Wonderful Counsellor, who hath the tongue of the learned, and who purchased consolation and acquired experimental skill to impart it at a costly rate—even by passing through such floods and fires of sin-avenging wrath, as none of those who flee to him for refuge shall ever be called to encounter. How free and rich is the invitation which warrants us without money or price, to take home to ourselves those infinitely precious sufferings, and that divine righteousness, which secure the receiver of them from hell, and give an indefeasible title to the endless and boundless joy of heaven ! And how ready is the meek and lowly, though enthroned Saviour, to welcome and help forward the feeblest endeavours of a soul, desirous to be in his debt for a whole eternity of life and salvation ! Therefore, my dear madam, let not the noise of the murmurs of hell drive you away from coming to those wells of salvation, from which millions have drawn water with joy, and in consequence have

waxed valiant in the spiritual fight, and have proved superior to all the violence and craft of the enemy. Every thing which your heart can wish for, to support and cheer you in this warfare, is in Christ, and is there in abundance. And though his ways are high, mysterious, and unsearchable, yet they are an unsearchable mystery of love. Leave it with him to unfold and unriddle his ways in his own time; but go forward, leaning on his hidden strength, love and wisdom. It is no wonder that we are often perplexed in looking at his dispensations, for he is looking into all the abysses of eternity, but we are fixed on an inch of time. Let us implicitly acquiesce in the conduct and disposal of him who hath said "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." "I will make darkness light before thee and crooked things straight."

It is probable the heaviest part of your distress may arise from the want of light within, and from the fear of being forsaken by the Lord, and the felt want of divine support and consolation in the time of need. It is not enough, should this be the case, merely to complain. It is necessary that we use the most earnest endeavours to get at the bottom of the causes of such complaints. It is certain that the Lord has not said to us, "Seek ye my face in vain." If we do not with sensible comfort and refreshment find him, it is time to look well to our manner of seeking him. That resolution is, in such circumstances, peculiarly seasonable, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord;" and in another place, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn and he will heal us, he hath smitten and he will bind us up." I therefore entreat you to consider and to

believe that the Lord Jesus, the Prince of life, the strong and mighty Saviour, is near you and about your bed; and that he is knocking loud and long at the door, seeking for an entrance into your heart. It is your part to examine what is hindering; and though your own power cannot remove the hindrances, yet you may take a distinct view of them, and may cry to him to make way for himself. Jesus Christ is well skilled in the work of softening, humbling, enlightening, melting down, and thoroughly subduing the foward rebellious heart; and one hour's intimate converse with him will do that for you which you can hardly so much as imagine, much less believe, until it is done. O that he may soon give you to see a little of his marvellous light, and to feel something of the exceeding greatness of the power which raised him from the dead! And that he may open to your view the glory of his person, the mystery of his love, the wonderful virtue of his blood, death, and obedience, for removing infinite guilt, darkness, and misery; and to give us an entrance into the holiest of all, and access to the pure river of the water of life, and to the cheering fruit of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. Lam. i. 16.

Whence is it, my soul, that these distressing thoughts arise? Pause and inquire. Is the Holy Ghost the Comforter indeed withdrawn, when Jesus, thy Jesus, sweetly and graciously promised that he should abide for ever? This cannot be. Is the righ-

* Letters of Dr. Love.

teousness of Jesus less, or hath his blood to atone and cleanse lost its efficacy? Oh, no! Jesus' righteousness and Jesus' all-atoning propitiation, like the Almighty Author of both, must be eternally and everlastingly the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Hath God thy Father forgotten to be gracious? Whence, then, my soul, is thy leanness, thy fears, thy despondency? Canst thou not discover? Oh, yes. It is all in thyself, and thy unbelieving frame; thou art looking to thyself, and not to all-precious Jesus! Thou wantest to feel some new frame of thy own; some melting of heart, or the like; and if thou couldest be gratified in this, then thou wouldest go to Jesus with confidence, and then plead, as thou thinkest, Jesus' name, and blood, and righteousness.

No wonder then that thou criest out, the Comforter is far from thee; for the Holy Ghost will teach thee that all comfort is in Jesus, and in Jesus only. And mark this, my soul: if thou wilt seek comfort in any thing out of Jesus, though it be in the sweetest frames as thou mayest think of thine, Jesus, in mercy and love, will put thy comforts out of thy reach. O then, come to Jesus, poor and needy, with or without frames. Make him all in all; and he will be thy joy, thy comfort, and thy portion for ever.*

Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

Though the believer may be enabled, in the habitual working of faith, to sustain his "hope in the word" of his God, yet "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Prov. xiii. 12. Perhaps you feel, droop-

* Hawker.

ing soul, that you have waited long enough, and still the promise is delayed. But what is the blessing that you are waiting for? If it regards the actual life of your soul, this, as being absolutely necessary, is promised and given. If it regards only your spiritual enjoyment, its time and measure must be left with the Lord. Meanwhile do not fear, that by the protracted delay the blessing is likely to slide away from you. You will find in the end that perseverance in the exercise of waiting faith, has turned to double advantage; that many prayers have been offered, and important blessings vouchsafed, even when sensible tokens of refreshment and acceptance were withheld. Indeed you could not expect to lose any thing in these conflicts of faith and patience, by which your gracious Lord is bringing your wayward will into more implicit subjection to himself. May you not rather believe that the blessing, when the "Lord has hastened it in its time," will be so much the sweeter for every wrestling exercise, which, as it were, "took it by force"? Matt. xi. 12. Be assured, that waiting time is most precious. Not a moment of it could possibly have been spared. It is the preparation time and work, by which the Lord has been progressively moulding your heart for the reception of a more refreshing and abundant mercy. And yet the season of waiting is far from being a season of hardness, indolence, or carelessness.*

I find it often difficult to distinguish between what is really temptation and sin, and what is merely the effect of infirmity, the disabilities of a diseased body,

* Bridges' Exposition of Psalm cxix. ver. 82.

and the weight of oppressing trials. But we need not be nice to distinguish ; for whatever it be that troubles us, or is an impediment in our way, whether bodily or mental, our highest wisdom is not to stand and dispute with it, but to go immediately to Jesus, and with simplicity, hope, and dependence, to say, Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me ! Thou hast bidden me to bring my burdens to thee ; and here I bring them : O take them, and give me rest, according to thy word ! There is much danger in poring too intensely over either ourselves or our troubles. Under any bodily disease, if we were more anxious to examine it, to watch its progress, to mark its different and varying symptoms, than to go to the physician, and diligently follow his directions, and rest on his judgment of the case, our recovery would be greatly retarded. Thus it is in spiritual things ; we should indeed be humble and ashamed for our manifold sins and defects: but after all, it is by simply looking to Christ that we shall be healed. It is by faith our adversary must be resisted, and not by humiliation *alone*. I speak the more freely on this, because I suffer much from depression and languor, both of body and mind, and am sometimes ready to say, Surely every fruit of the Spirit is withered, and nothing is left in my cold heart but barrenness and death ! And if Satan could make me believe this to be true, he would be fully as content as if he could lead me to plunge into open sin; for despair is the last extinguisher of faith ; but through mercy, He in whom are our fresh springs, grants at times fresh supplies of life, and renewed manifestations of his free grace and favour, and then we can say, *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall*

arise : though cast down, my Saviour will not suffer me to be destroyed. It is indeed, as you say, very hard to keep from looking too much on the dark side of things, when scarcely any thing else presents itself; for really *within* us, and *without* us, a bright spot is scarcely to be discovered. But there is above us a bright prospect, a Sun of Righteousness always shining, which we should do well to contemplate; and when disease, or temptation, or corruption form so thick an atmosphere as to intercept the brighter beams, yet let our faith, as a mighty principle, teach us to say, as we do when the sun in our lower sky is obscured by damps and fogs, ‘ The clouds prevent the shining of the sun to-day, but it is still behind the cloud, and will break forth again by and bye as bright as ever.’ May we both begin and go through the year (if life is continued) looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith ; for by thus looking we are strengthened.*

Does not every Christian find that he is ready to sink at times? If he does not find this, he does not carry human nature about him. The men of God have not only their share in common, of trials and troubles, but they have trials of a peculiar kind also—trials peculiar to themselves. They have to contend with an evil heart of unbelief, and with a host of corruptions ; and sometimes God does not send single trials, but a host—not only many, but lasting. If a person is on a sick bed, should the pain be ever so acute, yet it would be more bearable, if assured that it was only to last an hour or a day ; but if it con-

* Mrs. Hawkes’ Memoirs, p. 304.

tinues for years, it becomes painful from the very length of it. Yet God deals so with some of his dearest children; it may grow darker and darker with them, yet all is well. No sooner do we get the victory over one corruption, than another breaks forth. The believer may have been weeping for months and months over pride: no sooner is he enjoying a little victory over this, than unbelief breaks forth. After a long conflict with this, his heart may be next engrossed by some earthly object, and he has to contend with this: this over, and something else arises; and thus the Christian life is a continual warfare: and need we wonder that this is the case, when we consider who are our enemies, and what a world we have to pass through. Well then may the Christian faint—Christians often faint—in duties also, and for this reason,—they make but little progress, they conclude that they have made none; that they have scarce set their feet on the lowest round of Jacob's ladder: they have no comfort—they try to run: the law of the Lord is written upon their hearts, but they fail; they find so many to oppose, to entangle and allure. The Christian tries to live in prayer: he feels his poverty and his danger, his corruptions, his dependance; he prays, but he is soon tempted to turn from prayer; he no sooner begins to deal with his Lord in the closet, than something comes and turns him aside. This discourages him; he tries to enjoy what he sees the people of God enjoying, but he has often nothing but bitterness. He knows that his affection towards Christ should be glowing—rising higher with his moments, as every moment sinks him deeper in debt; he turns in and finds his heart cold; he can hardly tell whether he

loves at all ; then he faints—thinks he is not a partaker of Christ. What then keeps up the Christian's faith ? for if he had no faith he would sink in mire and clay. First, the fulness of Christ : he filleth all in all. The fulness of his merits to justify ; the fulness of his grace to sanctify ; the fulness of his pleasures, his strength, his love ; then he cries, When all is gone in me, what can I want but I may find in Christ ?

Have you ever had such a view of Christ, that whatever you want, there it is ? If you have suffered the loss of any thing, go to him : he can not only make it up, but give you much more. If you have lost the world, he has ten thousand worlds ; if the stream, he is the fountain ; if your lamp is gone out, come to the sun.*

* Jones's "Basket of Fragments," p. 97.

CHAPTER XV.

COMFORT UNDER THE LOSS OF UNGODLY RELATIVES AND FRIENDS.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord."

SOME of the bitterest draughts of the earthly cup of trial, are presented to the believer by the hands of "those of his own household." We do not now allude to the persecution or hatred which is sometimes manifested by ungodly relations, to a sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus; but to the mental sorrow and anguish which cannot fail to touch the heart of one who, having tasted of the heavenly gift, and been refreshed from the living stream, yet sees those dear as life itself, hungering in the midst of plenty, thirsting while the stream of life glides quickly by, fainting amid the fullest, freest offers of strength and of salvation.

'Still, while the sun of life remains,
Hope sweetly glitters o'er the plains.'

But when that sun has set in darkness, when the shades of death have come down with unmitigated

horror upon one whom we have loved with all the fondness of earthly relationship and the tenderness of earthly friendship ; when the bereaved partner witnesses the death-struggle, without one ray of light from the better land ; when the child leans over the lifeless remains of a parent, who died and made no sign ; when a parent is called on to look not only on the flower cut down while yet it is not fully blown, but also to agonize over the recollection that the child of affliction has found an untimely grave, by losing God : alas, who can describe, what tongue can tell the bitterness of sorrow such as this ! Perhaps no trial can equal this, to the mind rendered truly sensitive by the life-giving spirit of the gospel, in depth as well as protracted intensity of suffering.

It was doubtless this peculiar kind of bitterness which overwhelmed the soul of the king of Israel as he mourned over the death of his son Absalom. How touching, how affecting is his exclamation—"Oh Absalom, my son, my son !" His was not the mere grief of separation. On another occasion, we perceive how he bore up under the trial. When the child of his affections was taken away, he rose and was comforted by the conviction, " He cannot return to me, but I shall go to him." But when Absalom was slain, the trouble of his soul was far more deep-seated, his sorrow admitted not of a similar consolation to that which he enjoyed under his former bereavement. Absalom was cut off in the midst of great and fearful sins,—the gloom of the grave had settled on him, without his Father being able to gather one ray of hope, as to his future prospects,—and here was the cause of the anguish of his heart. It was not a mere temporal separation from Absalom

it was the prospect of an eternal separation that weighed so heavily upon his mind ; and thus we find him expressing the strong, the ardent desire, "Would God I had died for thee." He felt that he himself could rest under the shadow of the Almighty, that he could fear no evil in the valley of the shadow of death ; and therefore, the strong though unavailing wish of his soul was that he had been taken, while his guilty, godless son was spared, to give him further time and opportunity for repentance and turning to the Lord his God.

And what comfort can be afforded to the mourner here ? Evidently none can be directly supplied from the circumstances of the case. Doubtless in those instances, when the faintest hope can be indulged, that it may have pleased the God of all grace, even at the latest moment of existence, to deliver from going down to the pit, the bereaved mourner may derive some rest, some solace for his troubled spirit, in dwelling on the sovereign grace and free mercy of God, and from the expectation, slender and feeble though it be, that yet there may be a reunion with the departed in the realms of bliss. But when hope is manifestly extinguished ; when the dread reality is stamped indelibly on the mind, that the grave has closed over the unforgiven, then, wherever comfort or relief is to be obtained, it is manifest that these must come from considerations apart altogether from the immediate cause of our affliction.

Let, then, the Psalmist guide us here as one who having this record, that he was "after God's heart," yet knew what it was to have fearfulness and trembling coming upon him, and horror overwhelming him. "When I am in heaviness," says he, "*I will think*

upon God.” “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.” “When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.”*

This is the only refuge, the only source of comfort,—“I will think upon God ;” think upon him, so as to submit to his will, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right.” “Clouds and darkness are round about him, *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*” Think upon him, so as to quell every rising murmur, every hard thought of his dispensations, till, like David, we can say, “Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned from his mother ; my soul is even as a weaned child.”

But the great and especial comfort under such affliction is “to think upon God” in *Christ*, as our “All in All :” to have the spirit so filled with his fulness as to be independent of every thing else ; to think of him, in all the precious and endearing characters in which he presents himself to the believer’s soul,—as our friend, with *more* than the affection of a “mother, a sister, or brother,”—as our Shepherd, under whose tender care we can lack nothing ; to draw from him, and from him *alone*, the fulness of our joy, and the stability of our peace ; to be, in fact, so complete in him as to be able to feel with the apostle, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

* Psalm lxxvi. 8,—Prayer-Book Version.

Thus, and thus only, by looking away from the direct course of sorrow, and by simply “looking unto Jesus,” we are enabled to “cast our burden upon the Lord;” a burden which is truly “too heavy for us to bear,” and to take “his easy yoke and light burden on us, and so find rest to our souls.”

And, in connection with this filling of the mind with all the “fulness of God,” let us observe, that as a means of comfort, nothing tends more to the restoring of peace to the troubled spirit, and the continued and serene resting upon the truth, faithfulness, and love of our covenant God, than the constant and zealous devotion of the heart and life to his glory. Especially let the bitterness of sorrow we are experiencing, in the removal of a friend, it may be under the *most trying* circumstances, lead us not to the indulgence of grief alike dishonouring to our God and unprofitable to ourselves; but let it rouse us to more active and more abiding exertion in behalf of all around us. Let it stir up within us holy diligence, as regards our own character and conduct, that “we may shine as lights in the world,” and that our “profiting may appear unto all men;” that we may preach the gospel to our friends by a godly and consistent life, as well as make known to them the precious strains of the word of peace and reconciliation. Let it be a stimulus to habitual self-examination and constant prayer, that everything in our spirit or our conversation, which may prove a stumbling-block instead of a help to others, may be removed; that, in fact, we may “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,—and thus be an example in “word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.”

And besides leading us to self-scrutiny, that we may "wear the image of the heavenly" before all men; let the acuteness of our sorrow quicken the soul to devise fresh expedients, by which to influence others to run the Christian race with us. Not only to *use* opportunities, but to *make* opportunities, by which we may "do good unto all men," and especially to them who are of the same household with ourselves; not to delay or procrastinate regarding matters apparently the most trifling, as these may eventually issue in that which is vitally important; not to suffer indolence or false delicacy to interfere between us and the object of our solicitude and our prayers, so as to check the word of earnest entreaty, the expression of Christian love and tender anxiety, or the solemn, though careful caution of a faithful friend. Let us act up to that exhortation of God's servant of old, "Whatsoever thy hands *find* to do, do it with thy might." Let the hand of the Christian not only wait for guidance to an open door, let it try every way of possible access, every means of possible usefulness; let it never hang down, but let it firmly grasp the promises,—and drawing unwearied energy and unfailing hope from their blessed fulness, let it be ever moving by "the strength of the Lord and the power of his might" in every good work, labouring, in all that it *finds to do*,—with hope, because "He is faithful who hath promised," and with constancy, because the same gracious Being hath declared "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

In the exercise of this self-discipline, and the putting forth of Christian energy for others, we shall experience an alleviation of sorrow to be gained in no other way. The listless giving way to the grief which

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wounds us will debilitate, the active struggle for Christ under it will nerve and strengthen us. The heavy and inactive submission to the weight of affliction, will every day render us more wretched under its oppression, while the rising up of the soul to increased and devoted exercise under the banner of love, will cause peace to flow in upon us like a river. And, though we may carry the scar of our sorrow with us to the grave, yet it shall be to us a source not of fretful uneasiness or pain, but of heartfelt joy and heavenly hope, since we shall be able to point to it, as the deepest wound inflicted on our stricken soul, which the gentle hand of him who directed the stroke in wisdom, has healed in unutterable love.*

* Rev. D. T. K. Drummond.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNDER THE LOSS OF FRIENDS.

Jer. xlix. 11. Thess. iv. 13, 14. Rev. xiv. 13.

The following extracts from the “Family of Bethany,” and other valuable and delightful works, are beautifully adapted to comfort the believer in the darkest hour of trial, even under the first overwhelming sense of those bereavements, which seem at the moment to extinguish the faint glimmering star of hope, and to leave us in utter darkness and desolation. Oh! even then, in that most agonizing moment, when the last cherished breath of some loved one, has fled for ever!—when we gaze upon the still, lifeless form of one on whom a few short hours ago all our earthly hopes were centered—when the bereaved soul is perhaps tempted to exclaim, “Lord, if thou hadst been here,”*—if thou hadst but listened to my earnest supplications! but now it is too late; I cannot look for the dead to be restored,—“I shall go

* John xi. 21.

to him, but he shall not return to me,"*—"I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection, at the last day,"†—but in the mean time I am left a desolate wanderer, a bereaved mourner in this vale of tears :—"My hope is perished from the Lord."‡ At such a moment as this the reflections suggested in the following extracts are well calculated to speak peace and comfort to the heart-stricken mourner, and to lead him to exclaim, " Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple."

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

There is doubtless much of grief expressed in these words—there is even something of despondency; she can look only to the past, to the tomb of a beloved brother; she seems to think that Jesus has come too late to succour her,—that now there is nothing left to her but tears. Yet there remains in her a remnant of faith which seems to revive, to gather strength, and to grow in the presence of Jesus. She still believes that, had He been there, he could have recovered her brother, put an end to his disease, and with one word wrested from death its prey, and from the grave its victory; and as the flower beaten down and bruised by the storm, insensibly rises under the genial beams of the sun, this gem of faith which remains in the heart of Martha, develops itself, and grows beneath the compassionate and majestic looks of the Saviour. She has before her that High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Her faith rises higher every moment, and with every

* 2 Sam. xii. 23.

† John xi. 24.

‡ Lam. iii. 18. John xi. 4.

look of the Redeemer; her soul opens again to hope; her heart is no longer shut up by grief; the darkness of her mind disperses; her soul, already penetrated with an unspeakable consolation, surmounts the evils which lately overwhelmed her; she feels that Jesus, who has come to her aid, will find, in his infinite love and boundless power, all the blessing which she implores. "But I know," says she with confidence, "that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

O triumph of faith! O the happiness of my Saviour's presence! consolation and peace are indeed near unto that afflicted soul which thus opens to confidence! From faith to peace and happiness there is but one step, or rather the peace of God which "passeth all understanding," and which is better than life, is the first and sweetest partner of faith.

O disciples of Jesus! you who know that the Saviour is always near you, who have never had occasion to exclaim with grief "Lord, if thou hadst been here," because you know that he is always present, always ready to hear you, always ready to bless you, why is it that your faith so often remains below that of Martha? Why is it that you cannot, like her, throw yourself with confidence upon the power and love of Jesus? Why is it that you are so often cast down in your trials? Why is it that your soul, overwhelmed by your infirmities, languishes in the depths of despondency and affliction? Why is it that it cannot soar into the regions of faith, hope, peace, and joy? Ah! comes it not from this, that you believe not; that you have not a simple child-like faith? Distrust and doubt shut up your heart, close your soul against the unspeakable consolations of your God,

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and render you deaf to the voice of his grace, the voice of his promises, and the voice of his love. Instead of coming out like Martha from the midst of your miserable comforters, to go to Jesus, whose presence has ever been, and eternally shall be, “the fulness of joy,” you ask of men consolations which they cannot give you. Instead of drawing refreshment for your soul, which thirsteth after peace, from the fountain of living waters, you “hew out unto yourselves,” in the wilderness, “cisterns, broken cisterns, which” you well know “hold no water;” or else you look to yourselves, to your sufferings, and to your infirmities. Instead of taking God at his word, presenting his promises unto him as undeniable titles, and telling him with a full assurance of faith, as Martha did to Jesus, “Even now,” (yes even *now*, when all seems lost to me, when all the objects of my dearest hope seem to have disappeared for ever,) “even now, I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee;”—Instead of acting thus, is it not true that you open your Bible with distrust, and with a secret repugnance, as if it were not the word of God; as if the invitations of that word were not addressed to yourselves, yea, to yourselves who read it with so much indifference? And if afterwards you fall down on your knees to pray, under a sense of your infirmities, your griefs, your sins, and defilement, is it not true that you address Jesus as if he were no longer “able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him?” As if he had not given you “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved for you in heaven?” As if “His arm were shortened that he could not save,” or his love were not great enough to do so? O fools! why are we “so slow of

heart to believe what the word of our God declares?" Do we not know, do we not all know, as well as Martha, better than Martha, that whatsoever our powerful Intercessor shall ask of God, God will give it him? And can we not answer that invitation of his love, "Let him that is athirst come; whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely!" O, it is faith that is wanting upon earth. "Lord! I believe, help thou mine unbelief!" *

Oh, let then these promises of the Lord, which are all *yea* and *amen* in him, be our eternal refuge from the shipwreck to which we are continually exposed, from the ever-varying winds of our unbelief, our weakness, our passions, and our corruptions! His promises, my beloved brethren, my fellow-voyagers on the stormy sea of our terrestrial life, his promises alone will discover to our view that Rock of Ages, from whose summit we shall be able to contemplate, without fear, the billows and the tempest. His promises alone will be to us what the star which directs him to the port is to the mariner wandering over the surface of the deep. His promises alone will bring within the reach of our observation, "that new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Having, then, taken in our hands and in our hearts his promises, let us go to him, and let us present them before him as our only plea; let us, in full assurance of faith, ask of him light, strength, and life for our souls. Then, like the sisters of Lazarus, we shall find the sweetest consolation even at the grave of those whom we have most fondly loved upon earth.

* Family of Bethany, p. 187.

Then these mournful scenes of separation and of grief shall lose their bitterness and disappear, so that we shall be able to discern scenes of eternal bliss which we already possess by a "hope that maketh not ashamed," because it is based upon the promise of God.

Are there among those whom I address on the part of God any who have suffered in their own person from sickness or pain, or have seen those who were dear to them enduring like afflictions, let them not hesitate; let them approach with confidence the throne of grace, and say, like the sisters of Lazarus, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick!" But this is thy promise, "Thou woundest and thy hands make whole, thou killest and thou makest alive!" I know that "whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

Are there among you any who are exposed to privations, to poverty, to indigence, and who have the pain of seeing your children, beings whom you love, consumed by want which you are unable to satisfy;—hasten to bring to Jesus the titles to his compassion which he has given you: "He who feeds the fowls of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and "even now I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Is there among those whom I address any one whose soul is troubled by a sense of sin, or by painful doubts as to his salvation? Let him hasten to present to the love of a redeeming God his request and his claim, "Thou hast borne my sins in thine own body on the tree," "Thou hast come to seek and to save that which was lost," I have heard

thy voice, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Like as a father pitith his children, even so the Lord pitith them that fear him." "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," and even now, "I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

O, happy the man whose hope and consolation is in Jesus! Happy the man, who in the midst of all the miseries with which our life abounds, can look by faith to his Saviour, and repeat with full and unreserved confidence, the triumphant song of one of God's servants who preceded him in his warfare. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise up against me, in this will I be confident." Psalm xxvii. 1, 3.*

Ye sisters of Lazarus, of all times and all places, who weep for the ravages which death has made in your affections, or dread it for yourselves, come to the fountain of living waters, come and draw from the source of true consolation; come and quench that thirst for immortality, which consumes you, and makes you mourn over the frightful instability of

* Family of Bethany, p. 193.

every thing human and mortal; come to Christ; come and hear his divine voice; out of his mouth flow consolation, hope, and life. What!—saith he unto you, as he did unto David, to Martha, and to Mary,—What! thou weepest for the death of some dear object of your affection. But cease to call that death which is only a birth into a new life; cease to mourn for the happiness of him who has gone before thee! “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me shall never die.” “All that are in their graves shall hear my voice.” Those eyes which you once saw closed to the light of heaven, shall open again full of glory, on the day of eternal meeting: those lips upon which you have once seen the smile of affection playing continually, but which you have beheld blanched with the paleness of death, shall be re-animated, to commence with you, pure from all defilement, the new song of eternal deliverance. That hand which, in pressing your hand for the last time, fell cold and lifeless, shall be lifted up to the throne of God, with yours and with those of all the royal priesthood, to adore him for ever and ever. “They shall not return to us, but we shall go to them.” Jesus is the resurrection and the life! “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” “Believest thou this?” saith Jesus to the sister of Lazarus, with an accent of the tenderest love, and desiring to draw forth from her a confession which would evince that she had in her heart this principle of eternal life. If thou believest this, he seems to say, thou shalt soon find in that faith a healing balm for thy deep affliction; thy tears shall be changed into thanksgivings;

the darkness which envelopes thy soul shall be dissipated by that bright light; the pain of separation so agonizing to the unbeliever, to him who has not a living faith, shall be alleviated by the assured hope of an eternal re-union. I also, on the part of God, ask you, O immortal beings who hear me! believe ye this? Is Jesus to you the resurrection and the life? Can you joyfully apply to yourselves those words of eternal truth, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"? When you contemplate as at hand, the grave which shall soon open to receive you, and into which all that is mortal in you shall soon descend, can you with confidence look beyond it to that eternity which is the object of the wishes and hopes of the redeemed in Jesus? O may you, may we all be enabled to answer with the confidence of Martha, "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, which should come into the world."

O Redeemer, since this faith in thy salvation is a free gift of thy grace, condescend to grant it to us all, while yet there is time! Make all these immortal beings feel the folly of seeking happiness in that which must become the prey of death, instead of going unto Thee, who art the resurrection and the life! Above all, Lord, when thou smitest them with the rod of affliction, when some painful event, some unexpected death, some heart-rending separation takes place, and brings trouble into their hearts; Oh, let them then hear thy voice of love issuing from beneath the ruins of that superstructure of false happiness which they had erected far from thee, and crying unto them with power, "Believest thou this?" Believest thou that I am the resurrection and the

life? believest thou that without me there is nothing but griefs, doubt, vexation of spirit, and eternal death? O Jesus, may every thing in this life fade away and disappear before the happiness of loving thee! To thee this heart belongs; may it beat for thee alone! And when it has but one last breath to breathe into thy bosom, may that breath bear to the foot of thine eternal throne this cry of hope, "Christ, Christ is my life; death is gain to me! Amen, Lord Jesus, Amen."*

MY DEAR MR. ——

I sit down to write to you, not with the hopes of suggesting any comfort, for I know by experience that it is he alone who maketh sore, who can bind up; he alone who wounds, whose hands can make whole. But I cannot help telling you how deeply I feel for you, &c. . . . Few have had more cause to weep for themselves; therefore few ought to be able to weep so sincerely with others, or to tell them of that comfort whereby they have been comforted of the Lord. Oh, indeed, at such moments this world is a sad blank. All seems mysterious, confused, desponding. The devil suggests questions and rebellious feelings, which at other times we should shudder at the very idea of, and we almost say, "I do well to be angry." Is this your case, dear W——? or can you, through the cloud so perceive the smile, not only of peace, but of affectionate tender love, in the countenance of that Father who holds the rod, as to be constrained to run into those very arms which chastise. Oh, how blessed you are, if enabled to take this comfort; you are spared the agonies I was

* Family of Bethany, p. 216.

permitted to feel for a while, when, with all the promises, I could feel no comfort in believing them to be all mine ; but found I could not grasp at them in my own strength, but needed the support of the same spirit as sustained Christ on Calvary. Never, but for the books of Job and Jonah, could I have believed that my tender Father could stand by, see it all, and yet wait to be gracious to such a wretch. But " faithful is he who hath promised :" " he will not leave you comfortless." It is in faithfulness he has afflicted you. Because you are his son, he deals with you as he dealt with his Son. Even if shut out from sensible communion with Him, so was He, whose only support was, that He could still say, " My God."

No affliction at the time seems to be joyous ; but wait on the Lord, he will comfort your heart. I know he will. That Comforter who made up for his bodily presence, is still all-sufficient to make up for your dear child's. If we could see but one glimpse of his love in these afflictive dispensations, if we knew now as we shall know hereafter, we should indeed say, " Our Jesus has done all things well." No metal on earth is of sufficient value to shew how precious to him is the trial of your faith, as it shall be to his honour and glory at the great day. Oh ! what a great need-be there must have been for this blow, when he could so chasten his beloved ones. Not one pang could be spared ; for he sits himself as a refiner over his fire to temper the heat, and he feels every anguish with you ; not like the pity of a friend who never knew what sorrow was ; but the sympathy of him who was a " man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," who experienced all we can possibly feel,

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that he might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and succour us when tempted.

Ah, what lessons our dear Lord is now teaching you! Lessons which angels can never learn; teaching by heart, what was perhaps only known by rote before. When he takes up the lesson, we find none can teach like a parent. How differently we read "All is vanity." "Oh, that I had wings like a dove." How it shews us what must be the viciousness of sin, and the greatness of the Saviour's love to the sinner!

How unspeakable and incomprehensible must be the weight of glory, when the Holy Spirit can call these "light afflictions," compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. And does it not teach us also to sympathize with our dear Lord in his sufferings, when we cannot even taste his bitter cup, without foreign strength; while Father, Son, and Holy Ghost seem united in comforting us; cordials at hand for every woe, in the exceeding great and precious promises wherewith they comfort us? He could say, "I looked for some to have pity upon me, but there was none; for comforter, but I found none." Alas! I believe there is even in the mind of the believer something which disposes him to turn to things of time and sense, though his judgment is convinced of their insufficiency to make him happy. One thing after another must be cut off, which binds us to earth, and, it may be, the strings of our heart almost broken by the operation, but the Lord is determined to separate us from sin. I do believe he has purchased these afflictions for us, as well as every thing else. Blessed be his name, it is part of his covenant to visit us with the rod, little as we may be worthy of

it. May we be enabled to wait the issue. He says with power, "Give me thine heart"—how shall I give up any part of it?

He breaks our schemes of worldly joy,
That we may seek our all in him.

And can we quarrel with him for thus loving us? He who could say for us, "Reproach hath broken my heart; I am full of heaviness, my tears have been my meat day and night." Oh! that I could say any thing that could be of any comfort; but all I can do is to try and tell you what he has been to me in my trouble. He seems, (if I may so speak) to have watched every opportunity in which I should be most likely to feel my loss, as if it were to fill up the gap with his precious presence. Have I, in the rebellion of my heart said, I have no companion, I am left quite alone! He has spoken to me so sweetly in his word, that in spite of myself, I have been forced to say, "He is enough." Have I said 'I have none to open my mind to?' He has led me to say, "Then thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer, thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I." Have I said, 'I have lost the kernel of all my earthly joys, I have lost my husband?' He has led me to "Thou shalt call me Ishi, and shall call me no more Baali!" Have I said, 'I am left an unprotected creature in the midst of a wicked world?' He has led me to "Let thy widows trust in me." Or, a foolish creature with no adviser? He has led me to "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor!" "I will guide thee with mine eye." Or has it been, 'I have no prop to lean upon, going through this dark howling wilderness?' He has shewn me where the church is represented "coming up from the wilderness leaning upon her Be-

loved." And he is the same now; and I doubt not, but he is saying to you, Why weepest thou? why is thy heart grieved? am not I better unto thee than ten children? I believe it to be his love expressed in a peculiar manner. Peace unspeakable can be enjoyed in the midst of tribulation; the soul is able to realize the joy hereafter, and pant for it, as at no other time; and he is made more acquainted with himself and his Saviour, which I believe is the only real happiness after all.

Then, to draw the veil and look at her as she is, your prayers fully answered, are you regretting that she is not left to know more of the woes of this unhappy world? Was it not for the Lord that you were bringing her up! was it not your first desire for her that she should be found in his narrow way? and what is that? "Much tribulation." How far she has left you behind: perfect in the praise you are only learning to lisp. A child's death seems to be the triumph of redemption: He did not think it too much to give his son to be made miserable for you; will you not give him your child to be made unspeakably happy? You would not wish her back, merely that she might speak to you, and you to her. Could you form an idea of the reception she met with when ushered into the presence of her Saviour and her God? Could you see the wisdom and love which fixed the period of her existence here, you not only would not part with one pang, but would delight in the dispensation. By faith you are enabled to say "All is well;" and if a voice could reach you from the everlasting abodes, would it not re-echo back, "All is well?" No longer any distress; not one distracting thought, but peace reigning for ever; love the ever-

lasting theme ; love to Jesus, who is very near also her weeping friends : who walks with you in the furnace ; who puts under you his everlasting arms, and in a few short years will bring you to meet her, know her, and be happy with her for ever ; " so shall ye be ever with the Lord."

May Jesus now lift upon you his countenance, that in his light you may walk through the darkness ! May sad remembrance not draw your spirit down to earth ! May faith pierce the cloud of sorrow, and keep your happy soul above, rejoicing in that bliss which will soon be yours ! A little while, and you will behold Jesus, and find him really yours for ever ; a little while, and you shall join the just above ; a little while, and you shall see how this rough blast of human woe has hastened your little bark to the shore. May you know more and more of the value of the Balm of Gilead, more than you ever did before, and be able to say,

" Give what thou can'st, without thee I am poor ;
But with thee rich, take what thou wilt away." *

O MY POOR DEAR, DEAR —.

Indeed I do feel for you. Such short-lived happiness ! Oh ! what a weight of glory must there be, if these afflictions are not " worthy to be compared " to it ! May he give you out of the depth to say, It is all love ! To believe it to be so, it is very hard : " blasted my gourd and laid it low." This is the way I answer prayer for faith and grace. It is good to learn the meaning of words out of Christ's lesson-book. He learned it by the things which he suffered. Oh ! dear sister, we are God's treasure ! We often said,

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

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All is vanity ; often, that this is not our home. No, no, we belong to God, and are only here to be fashioned for him. He will not have us mistake it; he is a jealous God ; his is not foolish tenderness. Oh, no ! blessed be his name ? he loves too much to spare one necessary pain. He loves too much to give one unnecessary one. He as a refiner sits over his furnace. Wait and you shall see that this is just the thing in life you would not have been without. And he is not lost ; he is only gone before. Heirs together of the grace of life. Blessed word ! and without you he cannot be made perfect, the scripture says. He therefore will wait for you on the bosom of Jesus. Surely you would not have him rather with you, only that you might speak to him, and hear him speak to you. You are together, inasmuch as you are dwelling in Jesus, the same life in both, the pulse of which beats in the heart of Jesus. You have communion, for his thoughts are all about Jesus. When Moses and Elias appeared, they were speaking about Jesus.

Much loved sister,—You are about to enter into realities of consolation you have never imagined to be in God ; I seem to see you stepping down into a deep through which I have been wading ; and it is saying very, very little to say I feel for you ; I pity you ; I almost tremble for you ; but that is not all ; I can tell you I would not exchange what I have experienced of Jesus there, though it was the survivor died. I would die a thousand deaths rather than not have gone through all. I would not part with one pang, though still often smarting under it. I mean to say, dear —, that seeing things in the light of eternity, you have not only reason to bless

God for him, for his certain undoubted happiness, but to bless him for what he is about to teach you, through long days and longer nights of sorrow—lessons for eternity, which none but God can teach ; only to be learned in this world ; joy in sorrow ; a calm in the midst of a storm. May the God of peace be with you ! He will, I know he will.*

. . . . Blessed portion her's ! The crown without the cross ! Oh, does it not make us love that Saviour who extracted all the bitter, and left her only a cup of love ? Dear —, you do not, you cannot wish she had staid in this world, (that you might look at her, and talk to her) where pure happiness is only to be found in the ocean of tribulation, through which you now all wade : " She came to show how sweet a flower in Paradise would blow." Now, she is safely locked up in the casket of her God, to be brought forth when he shall open his jewels. The object is only removed from earth to heaven, round which your affections were entwined, that your heart may be drawn up, not downward.

It is no light thing to profess love to a " jealous God." It shall be tried, because much more precious than gold that perisheth. He vouchsafes to tell us the trial shall be found to his praise, honour and glory, at his appearing ; needful to him ; needful to us ! Sometimes it is purified in the bleeding of another's heart. We can talk, we can suffer, we can do, we can die ; but one thing, says Christ, thou lackest—prove me paramount to your dearest idol. How you must miss her in every turn, in every thing you do ; but the end of all things is at hand ! Let

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

faith take her stand on Mount Zion, and look on present things with a retrospective view. A hill looks different from the top and bottom. Do not look at the way. You know him who has engaged to carry you through; you shall go from strength to strength. The furnace shall be heated, proportioned to your faith; but he is the refiner, who swept the house, sought out and rejoiced over his bit of gold; you shall not be lost, for his name is in you. He sends you word—"Behold, I come quickly." Let hope spread out the wing of contemplation, fly over all between, anticipate your meeting with your betrothed husband, and your re-union with the family of God! so that joy and sorrow may be alike swallowed up in the rejoicing of hope; no regret in that wedding; nothing but joy. Oh! when he sets about blessing, he shall satisfy, for he blesses like a God. You shall be satisfied with him; satisfied with the way you have been brought; satisfied with the provision of your Father's house; satisfied with his likeness in yourself. Shall not the first word this family shall express one to another be—"Was it not worth all?" It was a "true report." "The half was not told." Our universal song, "Worthy the Lamb." Our particular song, "Our Jesus hath done all things well." Is this indeed ours, and will you lament? Is this your dear sister's, and will you repine? Oh, no! let the rest of your life be one expression of gratitude, for his having snatched one so loved from the very jaw of the lion; for having translated her into the kingdom of God's own Son; for having chosen her in him before the foundation of the world; for having written her name in the Lamb's book of life; for having dissipated every doubt of her peace in

Jesus; for having so gently carried his lamb in his bosom; for having followed her with goodness and mercy through the valley, till safely housed in her Father's home. Whether we wake or sleep, we live together with him; we lie upon the same bosom, and you shall find it filled with love. When experiencing his sweetness, let it remind you of what he is to her; let every tear whisper, "Faithful is he who promised."*

What a day has just commenced, my dear friend! It was on this same day last year that the ties were broken which bound me to my sweetest friend, to her who had the first claim to that endearing name. But do I say broken! No, they are not broken. My heart will never cease to cherish my beloved wife. It will always be full of the remembrance of her. The eleven years we passed together in the closest intimacy have formed a bond between us which nothing can dissever. And did we not love each other in God our Saviour, with the earnest desire of being more and more closely united one with the other in him, and of meeting together after this life, in his presence? Ah, no, we are not quite separated. Perhaps her thoughts now cannot come down to me. Perhaps it is not given to the blessed to behold what is passing on earth, because they would witness too much sorrow, too much corruption, and because their souls might then be grieved by such contemplations. Yet, perchance they are permitted to look upon earthly things, without their happiness being diminished, because they see them from a

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

higher point of view, and under a different aspect. Perhaps they may have the privilege of observing what is passing in this scene of our probation, once the place of their pilgrimage, and of sympathizing with the friends they have left there. Perchance my own wife is even now beholding me.

If *she* has seen me leave off writing to you for a while, to lift my heart in prayer, beseeching the God of all mercy to look in pity on my wretchedness, and to strengthen my weakness; beseeching him above all things, to help me to triumph over every earthly temptation, over all my own evil propensities, over everything that might prevent my re-union with her in heaven; if she has seen the earnestness with which I breathed this prayer, perhaps her glorified spirit has rejoiced in the sight, and from her blessed abode she is smiling on me. At least I know, that if she can no longer return to me, I can, through the great compassion of my blessed Saviour, go one day to her, to the place where she abides, where there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, but all will be perfect bliss, and I shall be re-united to her for ever.*

May the holy resignation of Job and of David be also mine! the godly obedience of Abraham be also my obedience! The sacrifice has not only been commanded, it is already accomplished; Oh! that I may humbly bow to the will of the Most High without a single murmur. Do I not know that his thoughts are not as our thoughts, and that his ways are far above our ways? Do I not know that he has approved himself a God of mercy to my Louise, and to my two

* Rev. F. A: A. Gouthier.

children, in removing them from the miseries of this life, and taking them to himself? Shall I repine at the happiness they are enjoying? Shall I think only of myself? Rather let me bless the all-wise and merciful God, that in portioning out our sorrow and our happiness, he has appointed that the happiness should fall to the lot of those dear objects of my affection, and the sorrow to me alone; yes, to myself alone, to whom they seemed necessary, and to whom the loss of them may be made so profitable, unless the end which the Lord had in view is defeated by my own wilfulness. O my friend, those dear ones are now under the shadow of his wings, fed with the best things from his mansion, filled with those pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore! Blessed thought, may it continue to support my heart! May it become my consolation! It is perhaps the only happiness I can now enjoy upon earth.

I know that it is to prepare my heart for the reception of his love that God has thus tried me. He designed to shew me the littleness of earthly things, and to make me feel deeply that there is but one thing needful—but one good part, which can never be taken away, and that I must, before all things, desire it, ask for it, and seek it.*

I can truly say, my dear friend, with the great and good Archbishop Leighton, that it was a sad stroke of your pen, which told me that your little one was dead; and with him, I would remind you, that your sainted child has only taken off his clothes a little

* Gouthier's Life.

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earlier, and gone to bed before you, as children are wont to do.

It is great grace (as a friend of mine circumstanced as you are once said to me) to have a child in heaven! and I am sure that while you weep, as you are permitted to do, over the early removal of your little one, there is the deep-seated feeling, that had you it in your power, you would not expose the tender blossom to the rude blasts and ungenial atmosphere of this sinful and hard-hearted world. What comfort is there in the doctrine of the communion of saints! My mind has been led to dwell with increasing delight on the thought of one already having joined that happy family, part of which has already passed the waves of Jordan, and joined our elder brother face to face in paradise. And who can tell what communion departed happy spirits may be permitted to have with those whom they have left in the ranks of the church militant on earth? May they not be sent to minister to the heirs of salvation? and as you say, how blessed an affliction will it be, if it lead you, under the teaching of the Spirit of God, to "comfort those that mourn with the comfort wherewith you yourself are comforted of God." If any thing could add to the happiness of your sainted child, surely it might lead him to tune his harp to songs of deep thanksgiving, to see that through the tears which you shed over his little grave, you are enabled to lead your flock to one who is the brother born for adversity, who has been with you in the furnace, and has only suffered it to burn away some of the ties by which you were bound to earth.*

* Letter from the Rev. J. H. Woodward to the Rev. D. T. K. D.

Is your happy soul still lifted up? Able in his light to walk through darkness? I know the dreary waste that lies before you. How his dear, dear company is missed—how tasteless and insipid everything appears—how you want that affection which entered into every trifle which concerned you—how you want an adviser, a protector, such a companion—one to weep when you weep—to rejoice when you rejoice. I know well what it is to lie down at night and say, where is he?—to awaken in the morning and find him gone—to hear the hour strike day after day at which you once expected his daily return home to his too happy fire-side—and find nothing but a remembrance that embitters all the future here. O my poor, poor —! if I cannot feel for you, who can? Who so often partook of your happiness? Sweet, precious time *past*. However, it is well for you that you have another to feel for you. If I know the meaning of the word sorrow, I also know of a joy a stranger intermeddleth not with. How tenderly our compassionate Lord speaks of the widow! As a parent who feels the punishment more than the chastened child. He seems intent to fill up every gap love has been forced to make: one of his errands from heaven was to bind up the broken-hearted. He has an answer for every complaint you may ever be tempted to make.

Do you say you have none now to follow, to walk with, to lean upon? He will follow you, and invite you to come up from the wilderness leaning on him as your beloved. Is it that you want one to be interested in all your concerns? Cast all your cares upon him, for he careth for you. A protector? Let thy widows trust in me. An adviser! Wonderful coun-

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sellor! Companion? I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you; I will never leave you, nor forsake you; I have not called you servants, but friends; "behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him, and he with me." One to weep with you? In all their affliction, he was afflicted; Jesus wept. When you lie down—safe under the shadow of his wings, under the banner of his love. When you awake—still about your path and about your bed. It is worth being afflicted to become intimately acquainted with, and to learn to make use of, the chief of ten thousand—the altogether lovely—the brother born for adversity—the friend that sticketh closer than a brother—the friend of sinners.*

Every thing which tends to aggravate a trial, seems more loudly to speak the amazing *love* which sends it. *Deep love*—when he smites it is to wound, it is to cause pain, not for his pleasure, but for our profit. It is "through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom." They on whom the Lord most bestows trouble here, will shine most brightly in the kingdom—polished stones fit for the royal diadem; tribulation of *every kind*—not merely persecution for the Lord's sake, but tribulation; and who partook of all so much as the King of Glory? The troubles incident to humanity Jesus made his own, all were appropriated by him, found in the cup he drank of, and were the essence of the baptism which he was baptized with—to which cup and baptism we are invited.†

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

† Ibid.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I should be pained indeed if you were to consider I have not often, often thought of and deeply felt with you in your last most trying, most peculiarly afflictive visitation. I have remembered you where alone I could be useful; and I doubt not you have received some sweet drops of cordial from his faithful messenger. I trust now, as of old, you could say, "It has been good." You have had an experience of his tenderness, which you would not be without, and we know little of. He allots you the most favoured place in his church on earth, to glorify him in the fires. Behold how he loves! What a reality in the promises, when learnt in the furnace! What pains he takes in your education! How bright he means you to shine!

Oh! is it not well for us that the cup of consolation is not in our hands? There is one who holds it, yes, holds it for you; and though he minglest the ingredient of sickness and trial, yet there are drops from the fountain of everlasting love mingled to sweeten the draught, and it has been sweet: yes, I know it has, and wait to hear it from your own mouth in a very few days, if the Lord conduct us in safety. My God does all things well. We cannot see it, we cannot feel it, but he has said; therefore in spite of sense, faith shall see, and faith shall feel, "He doeth all things well." "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." Mr. Howells says, a father's heart is never wholly seen till it descends in tears on the rod of chastisement—he knows where to chasten, where to strike. He cannot mistake as to the matter, manner, time, or place; all selected by infinite wisdom. "Oh! He doeth all things well."

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Infinite love is in the arrangement. There is the love, pity, vigilance; tenderness, anxiety, sympathy, caution; the whole head, the whole eye, the whole heart of a father at work. None but a father can tell the feelings of a father; when, indeed, he chastens, not for the indulgence of his own temper, but for the good of the child he loves. And who can tell what the refinement, exaltation, perfection of paternal feeling is in the bosom of him who so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son? *

Happy are they among his tried ones, who can thus read a Father's love, in those dispensations which are otherwise "not joyous, but grievous;" who judge him not by feeble sense and its false conclusions, but can say: the Lord is good; good to *me*; good in *this*, that is so painful. He means mercy, and blessing by it. "I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." This is the spirit and language of a child, that is very sweet to God, and very profitable to ourselves. Certainly, however he may yet afflict, he will let such know that they are his *dear children*. That word of kindness, "*My Son*" shall accompany every trial and mix a joy in it. "I will bring the third part through the fire," &c. Zech. xiii. 9.†

Your heart loves to do good, and fears, as we ought, nothing more than being of little or no use in the world. You would say, 'Welcome sorrow, and every kind of tribulation, if by this means I may be of service to any soul.' Be assured, from your distress I

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

† Rev. F. Goode's Sermons.

have learnt more than I ever knew before. I knew before, how salutary and blessed to the sufferers themselves all corrections are made at last, by that heart of love which ordains them ; but I did not know how much good a Christian is doing to the church, even at the time when her grief and anguish of spirit are the greatest. Yet then is it that her Christian friends are stirred up, as the prophet was by Hezekiah's representation of his extreme distress, to lift up their prayer with importunity. Then it is we feel more abundantly the sweet affection of soul—a sympathy most real, so strongly described by the apostle, when he says, “ If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.” Then it is we are led more deeply to consider the use, the necessity, the certainty also of a happy end of all our trials, when those who are most dear to the Lord are so deeply exercised. How many of your friends have now seen you taking refuge in the sure mercies of David, and been edified by the filial fear of your heart, lest you should be found impatient and untractable under the rod ! How many have been led to consider and believe the friendship of Jesus to be, of all things in the world most desirable, from the fruits you have enjoyed from it. Thus, as the faithful, when they suffered bonds and imprisonment, and gained the crown of martyrdom, became much more the objects of notice to the church, had the benefit of its prayers—quickened, convinced, converted, established many more than they would have done by their holy life ; so it is now, when a member of Christ is brought into great tribulation, our attention is arrested and fixed ; our friendship is much interested ; we receive with peculiar advantage instruction from their sufferings ; we listen

to the sayings which drop from their lips ; and are animated afresh with the hope of being gainers ourselves, when we shall, in our turn, be tried in the fire.*

DEAR MADAM,

Though I make no doubt you have heard of the loving-kindness of my God and Saviour to me, in the midst of his correction ; yet I am sure your sympathizing heart will rejoice in hearing that the power of Jesus is displayed as it is towards such a sinful man as I am.

It is said of Israel, returned from Babylon, “ When the Lord turned our captivity, then were we like unto them that dream.” But that one who hast lost the wisest counsellor, the ablest guide of his family, the most pleasing companion, the most affectionate wife —lost her, when all that, as a Christian minister, I ought most to love, was increasing in her ; when her experimental knowledge of the salvation of God had opened her mouth to speak so charmingly of his name ; when her children just began to be struck with her excellence ; that in such circumstances as these I should be for joy as one that dreams, is amazing indeed to myself, and must seem absolutely incredible to the world ! . . . My happiness springs from such an evidence of my wife’s being in glory, as amounts almost to sight ; so that I can engage in no religious exercise, but she is, as it were, an additional spur to engage in it with all my might. I feel my debt to my God enlarged in all his favours toward that other part of myself. I with gratitude adore him

* Rev. H. Venn to Lady M. Fitzgerald.

for the precious loan of so dear a child of his, for ten years and four months, to be my wife. I think over with much delight the many tokens of love from God during the time of her pilgrimage, and the consolations which refreshed and rejoiced her soul upon the bed of death. . . . Above all, I have now to praise my master, that I have an experimental proof that he giveth songs in the night ; that when dearest comforts are taken away, the light of his countenance, a little brighter view of his great salvation, a little stronger feeling of the tenderness of his heart, is more than a recompence for every loss we can sustain. I can now say, from proof, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," &c.*

DEAR MR. —

I should have answered your kind letter before this, had I any thing to tell you that could have given you any gratification. But alas ! I have been as desolate within as without. My earthly husband hid from me, my heavenly one I cannot find ; and Satan hard at work tempting me to say, What is this black thing I have done, which makes my Father so angry with me ? But oh, my dear Lord, let him not rule within ; quench his fiery darts ; shew me that I deserve far worse, even all the wrath of an offended God. But Jesus has "borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." These trials are only blessings, to fill up that which is behind of his afflictions. I am also tempted to think that I cannot be his, for I feel none of that comfort his children always feel, and I used

* Venn's Letters. To Mrs. Medhurst.

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to find in the hour of trial. . . . Jonah, "doest thou well to be angry?" "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned grievously against him." Oh, dear Mr. —, you do not know what it is to lose one so dear, so very dear; I can only compare it to the tearing asunder all the strings of my heart. Then such a gloomy prospect here the rest of one's life. After watching him day and night with so much anxiety, anticipating the joy of being allowed again to be with him; all at once so unexpectedly to have my hopes dashed from me, was what I did not think for some days I could have borne, because I forgot that as my day so should my strength be. In any other loss I have had, I never could pray for the bodily life of my friend, but in this, to which no other loss can be compared, night and day I could not help entreating the Lord to spare me that heavy blow. I really did think he meant to answer me, and hoped against hope, till the last breath left that dear body. . . . "But I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that in very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." I must wait to know and see why it is, till I know as I am known. That it is unspeakable love I have no doubt, because He who has sent it is no new friend, but a tried and precious one; and when it is good for me he will allow me to see that this God is love. But oh, I tremble when I look at my rebellion and ingratitude throughout it all. I have had much to shew me to myself this last year—to dig up the mud hid under the smooth surface. How it will astonish you—astonish angels, when the book of my sins is opened, except they are so blotted out with blood as to make them illegible. . . . I do not suppose there could be a stronger lesson of the

vanity of every thing earthly, than to look at me, last year and this. The prospects of happiness I seemed to set out with! and now, where are they? A living monument that man in his best state is altogether vanity. And see how my heart, without my knowing it, was upon earth. I could not have thought, one who professes to believe in the joys of heaven, and had tasted the realization of them by faith, could so mourn as one without hope—could so willingly call him back again. But I shall say no more, for these complaints only grieve my God, and annoy you.*

It needs a great stretch of faith sometimes, when the enemy comes in like a flood, to believe that God is as much at peace with me through Christ, as with those already above; that Abraham, now in glory, is not safer than I am. Is that presumption, do you think? What a precious name, a strong tower, into which if we run, we shall be safe! Were I left to myself I should run *from* it; I would not trust myself to his work, but seek to save myself from danger. But almighty love arrests me, pulls me in; and then rewards me for coming. How much there is in those words “are safe”—to think we are safe from every thing! No evil shall ever touch us, evil at the end or evil on the way—all paved with love; “all things shall work together for good.” I have got the promise of all others I want—“let thy widows trust in me.” I once wished there was a richer, a sweeter promise to widows; but I believe it requires to be brought into different circumstances, in order to feel the force of different promises. For the Lord knew that none so

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

suited widows as these few words. In looking round the wide world, so filled with wickedness, and seeing one has to pass through it alone, one would fear every step one took, so unprotected and forlorn, only for this promise. With this, "when I am weak then am I strong." It is not like him to invite us to trust in him, and then let any evil come nigh us. If his everlasting arms are underneath I shall dwell in safety alone. Let there be rebellions, revolutions, persecutions, earthquakes, any thing, every thing, "let thy widows trust in me" should be enough. I know my tabernacle shall be in peace. Sweet to think that the eye of the Lord is upon us, to deliver our soul from death. It seems to me, as a nurse keeps her eye upon a child, lest it should destroy itself, or as a keeper keeps his eye upon his poor lunatic—"the Lord is my keeper." Then unbelief jumps up, and says, How do you know all this is for you? Then I do not know what to say, but, "My Master told me so." His Spirit witnesses with my spirit. To those who believe, He is precious, and I think he is precious unto me: "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me." O that I could keep close to him; I want to be fixed on the rock. My grief is, that the waves of sin and the world give me so many shoves off it.*

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

A letter from —— informed me of the very heavy trial you have sustained. I did not like immediately to intrude upon your feelings; and since then, illness has prevented my writing. How I have longed to be

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

with you, and share your grief, though I am sensible of my inability to afford you any consolation. But I rejoice in the thought that faith has united you to one who is the God of comfort ; and his Spirit is the Comforter. May he shed abundantly of his precious influence into your heart, and your dear sister's, at this trying time ! May he " lift up the light of his countenance upon you " both ! and that will turn your mourning into gladness. Perhaps this bereavement will lead you nearer to Jesus ; for we have an unfailing promise, that " all things shall work together for our good." " Whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he *delighteth* : as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."* And then how sweet to be assured, that " in all our afflictions he is afflicted," that in all our troubles he is near to help ; that in all our bereavements he is ready to fill up with himself the painful dreary void which is made in our hearts. My beloved friend, I do not say these things to you, " because you know them not, but rather because you know them," and are, I trust, at this time living upon them. How vain were it to speak of earthly comfort under the heavy loss you have sustained ! But this is the very time when God's children often drink deepest of heavenly consolation : and I trust it is so with my precious friend. I know that our Heavenly Father has afflicted you in very faithfulness ; and though for the present your chastisement must seem " grievous indeed to you, yet hereafter it shall bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness."† In the mean time, may you be taught to lay hold on the gracious

* Rom. viii. 28. Heb. xii. 6. Rev. iii. 19.

† Psalm cxix. 75. Heb. xii. 11.

invitation to "call upon God in the day of trouble!" Make David's words your own—"from the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." "My soul trusteth in thee, and in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me."*

And may you, my dear friend, be able to apply to yourself the words of our God, "Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." "I, even I, am he that comforteth you—as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."†

MADAM,

Saluting your ladyship with grace and mercy from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; I was sorry to depart leaving your ladyship in grief, and would still be grieved at it, if I were not assured that you have one with you in the furnace, whose countenance is like unto the Son of God. I know that if you were not dear to God, and if your health did not require so much of him, he would not spend so much medicine upon you. All the brothers and sisters of Christ must be conformed to his image in suffering, and some do more strikingly resemble the

* Psalm l. 15; lxi. 2; lvi. 3; lvii. 1; lxxxvi. 7.

† Isa. xlviii. 10; II. 12; lxvi. 13; liv. 7, 8. Memoir of Mary Jane Graham, by Rev. C. Bridges. Letter to a Friend.

copy than others. Think, Madam, that it is a part of your glory to be enrolled among those whom one of the elders pointed out to John, "*These are they which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" You have lost a child—nay, she is not lost to you, who is found to Christ; she is not sent away, but only sent before, like unto a star which goeth out of our sight, doth not die and vanish, but shineth in another hemisphere: you see her not, yet she doth shine in another country. If her glass was but a short hour, what she wants of time she has got of eternity; and you have to rejoice that one belonging to you is now in heaven. Build your nest upon no tree here; for you see God hath sold the forest to death; and every tree upon which we would rest is ready to be cut down, to the end we may flee and mount up, and build upon the rock, and dwell in the holes of the rock. Whatsoever you love besides Jesus your husband, is a strange lover; now it is God's special blessing to Judah, that he will not let her find her paths in following her strange lovers, "*therefore behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths: and she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them.*" O thrice happy Judah, when God buildeth a wall betwixt her and the fire of hell! The world, and the things of the world, Madam, are the lovers you naturally affect—the hedge of thorns and the wall which God builds in your way, to binder you from your lovers, are the thorny hedge of daily grief, loss of children, weakness of body, uncertainty of estate, lack of worldly comfort, fear of God's anger for unrepented sins, but what do you lose though God twist

and plait the hedge daily thicker? God be blessed, the Lord will not let you find your paths; return to your first husband—do not weary, nor think that death walketh towards you with a slow pace; you must be riper ere you be shaken; your days are no longer than Job's, that were “*swifter than a post, and passed away as the swift ships, swift as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.*” There is less sand in your glass now than there was yesternight; this span-length of ever-posting time will soon be ended; but the greater is the mercy of God the more years you get to advise upon what terms, and upon what conditions you cast your soul into the huge gulf of a never-ending eternity. The Lord hath told you what you should be doing till he come; “*wait and hasten,*” saith Peter, “*for the coming of the Lord;*” all is night that is here, in respect of ignorance and daily ensuing troubles, one always making way to another, as the ninth wave of the sea to the tenth; therefore sigh and long for the dawning of that morning, and the breaking of that day of the coming of the Son of Man, when shadows shall flee away. Persuade yourself that the King is coming: read his letter sent before him, “*Behold I come quickly.*” Wait with the wearied night-watch for the breaking of the eastern sky, and think that you have not a morrow. I am loath to weary you: show yourself a Christian by suffering without murmuring; in patience possess your soul; they lose nothing who gain Christ. I commend you to the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus, assuring you that your day is coming, and that God's mercy is awaiting you. The Lord Jesus be with your spirit.*

* Rev. S. Rutherford to Lady Kenmair.

MADAM,

I trust I need not much entreat your Ladyship to look to him, who hath stricken you at this time; but my duty in the memory of that comfort I found in your Ladyship's kindness, when I was no less heavy in a case not unlike yours, urgeth me to say something now; and I wish I could with words ease your Ladyship. I am persuaded your physician will not slay but heal you; and seeing he calleth himself the surgeon, "*who maketh the wound, and bindeth it up again,*" (for to lance a wound is not to kill, but to cure the patient), I believe Faith will teach you to kiss the rod, and so to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, in the death of your child, to be above the power of us mortal men, who yet may pluck up a flower in the bud, and not be blamed for it. If our dear Lord pluck up one of his roses, or pull down sour and green fruit before the harvest, who can challenge him? For he sendeth us to this world as men to a market, wherein some stay many hours, and eat, and drink, and buy, and sell, and pass through the fair, till they be weary; such are those who live long, and get a hearty fill of this life. Others again come slipping into the morning market, and do not either sit or stand, buy or sell, but look about them for a little, and presently pass home again. Our Lord, who hath numbered man's months, and set him bounds that he cannot pass, hath written the length of our days; and it is easier to complain of the decree than to change it.

I verily believe, while I write this, our Lord hath taught you to "*lay your hand upon your mouth,*" but I shall be far from desiring you, or any other, to cast by a cross, like an old and useless bill, that is only

for the fire ; but would rather wish each cross were looked in the face seven times, and were read over and over again. It is the messenger of the Lord, and speaks something ; and the man of understanding will "*hear the rod and him that hath appointed it.*" Try what is the taste of the Lord's cup, and drink with God's blessing, that you may grow thereby. I trust in God, whatever speech I utter to your soul has this one word in it, "*Behold ! blessed is the man whom God correcteth,*" and that it saith to you, "Ye are from home whilst here; ye are not of this world, as your Redeemer Christ was not of this world." There is something in store for you which is worth the having ; all that is of this world is condemned to die—to pass away like a snow-ball before a summer's sun ; and since death took first possession of something of yours, he hath been, and is daily, creeping nearer and nearer to yourself, howbeit with no noise of feet. Your husbandman and Lord hath lopped off some branches already, and the tree itself is to be transplanted to the high garden. In good time be it, and our Lord ripen you. All these crosses are to make you white and ripe for the Lord's harvest-hook. I have seen the Lord weaning you from the world. It never was his mind it should be your patrimony ; and God be thanked for that, you look the liker one of the heirs. Let the moveables go : why not? They are not yours ; fasten your hold upon the heritage, and our Lord Jesus make the charter sure, and give your Ladyship to grow as a palm-tree in God's Mount Zion. Though shaken with winds, yet the root is fast.*

* S. Rutherford to Lady Kenmuir.

MADAM,

So oft as I call to mind the comforts that I myself, a poor friendless stranger, received from you here, in a strange part of the country, when my Lord took from me the delight of mine eyes, which wound is not yet fully healed and cured, I trust your Lord shall remember *that*, and give you comfort now at such a time as this, wherein your dearest Lord hath made you a widow, that you may be a “free woman for Christ;” and seeing among all the crosses spoken of in our Lord’s word, this giveth you a particular right to make God your husband, (which was not so yours while your husband was alive,) read God’s mercy out of this visitation; and albeit I must out of some experience say, the mourning for the husband of your youth, be, by God’s own mouth, the heaviest worldly sorrow; and though this be the heaviest burden that ever lay upon you, yet you know, if she shall wait upon him who hideth his face for a little, that it lieth upon God’s truth to be a husband to the widow. Therefore I entreat you, Madam, in the bowels of Jesus Christ, and by the comforts of his Spirit, and your appearance before him, let God, and men, and angels now see what is in you; the Lord hath pierced the vessel, it will be known whether wine or water be in it; let your faith and patience be seen, that it may be known, your only-beloved, first and last, hath been Christ, and therefore now place your whole love upon him, who alone is a suitable object for your love, and all the affections of your soul. God hath dried up one channel of your love, by the removal of your husband: let now that stream run upon Christ. The Lord never thought this world’s vain painted glory a gift worthy of you; and therefore would not

bestow it upon you, because he is to provide you a better portion. You are a child of the house, and joy is laid up for you; it is long of coming, but not the worse for that. I am now expecting to see, and that with joy and comfort, that which I hoped of you, since I knew you fully: even that you have laid such strength upon the Holy One of Israel, that you defy trouble; and that your soul is a castle that may be besieged, but cannot be taken. What have you to do here? This world never looked like a friend upon you: you owe it little love: howbeit you should woo it, it will not match with you, and therefore never seek warm fire under cold ice; this is not a field where your happiness groweth; it is up above, where there are a "*great multitude, which no man can number,*" &c. What you could never get here, you shall find there; and withal consider how in these trials, and truly they have been many, your Lord hath been loosing you at the root from perishing things, and hunting you to secure your soul. Now, Madam, I hope your Ladyship will take these lines in good part; and again, my dear and noble lady, let me beseech you to lift up your head, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh, and remember that star that shined awhile near you is now shining in another world. Now I pray that God may answer his own promise to your soul, and that he may be to you the God of all consolation.*

I am indeed grieved that your Ladyship is deprived of such a husband, and the Lord's church of so active and faithful a friend: but I know your Ladyship long

* S. Rutherford to Lady Kenmuir.

ago made acquaintance with that, wherein Christ will have joined you in fellowship with himself, even with his own cross : and hath taught you to stay your soul upon the Lord's good will, " who giveth no account of his matters." When he has led you through this water, that was in your way to glory, there are fewer behind ; and his order, in taking one before another, is to be reverenced. One year's enjoyment of heaven shall swallow up all sorrows, even beyond all comparison. What then will not a duration of blessedness, so long as God shall be, fully and abundantly recompense ? It is good that our Lord gives in eternity what time cannot take from you.*

MADAM,

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you. I know that you are near many comforters, and that the promised Comforter is here at hand also ; yet because I found your Ladyship a comforter to myself in my sad days, that are not yet over my head, it is my part, and more, in many respects, (howbeit I can do little, God knoweth, in that kind) to speak to you in your wilderness-lot. I know, dear and noble Lady, this loss of your dear child came upon you piece and part of it after another ; and that you were looking for it, and that now the Almighty hath brought upon you that which you feared ; and that your Lord gave you lawful warning, and I hope for his sake who prepared this cup in heaven, you will gladly drink, and salute and welcome the cross. I am sure it is not the Lord's mind to feed you with judgment and wormwood, and to give you waters of gall to drink. I know that your cup is sweetened with mercy, and that the withering

* S. Rutherford to Lady Kenmuir.

of the bloom, the flower, even the white and red of worldly joys, is for no other end but to secure the reversion of your heart and love. Madam, subscribe to the Almighty's will: put your hand to the pen, and let the cross of your Lord Jesus have your submission and resolute amen. If you ask and try whose this cross is, I dare say it is not all your own; the best half of it is Christ's. It sprang not out of the dust. Christ and you share this suffering, and is not this the language of the word of God—“*the fellowship of Christ's suffering* ;” and the “*remnant of the afflictions of Christ* ,” and the “*reproach of Christ* .” Christ, when he joined you to himself, took you and all the crosses and woe-hearts that follow you; and the word maketh no exception,—“*In all their afflictions he was afflicted* ,”—then Christ bore the first stroke of this cross, and I shall believe, for my part, he designs to distil heaven out of this loss, and all others like it; for wisdom devised it and love laid it on, and Christ owns it as his own—take it with joy as a visitation of God; and spend the rest of your appointed time, till your change come, in the work of believing; and let faith, which never yet deceived you, speak for God's part of it. It may be you think not many of the children of God are in such a hard case as yourself; but there are some who would gladly exchange afflictions with you—yet I know yours must be your own alone, and Christ's together. I confess it seemed strange to me, that your Lord should have done that which seems to wither the very root of your worldly comforts; but we see not to the ground of the Almighty's sovereignty. “*He goeth by on our right hand, and on our left hand, and we see him not* ,”—we see but pieces of the broken links of the chains of his providence.

O let the former work his own clay in what frame he
pleaseth !*

WORTHY FRIEND,

I desire to suffer with you, in the loss of a loving and good wife, now gone before, (according to the order and method of Him, of whose understanding there is no searching out,) whither you are to follow. He that made yesterday to go before this day, and the former generation, in birth and life, to have been before this present generation, and hath made some flowers to grow, and die, and wither in the month of May, and others in June, cannot be challenged in the order that he hath made of things without souls : and some order also he must keep here, that one might bury another: therefore I hope you will be dumb and silent, because the Lord hath done it. What creatures or under-causes do in sinful mistakes, are ordered in wisdom by your Father, at whose feet your own soul and your heaven lieth,—and so the days of your wife. If the place she hath left were any other than a prison of sin, and the home she is gone to any other than where her Head and Saviour is king of the land, your grief had been more rational: but I trust your faith of the resurrection of the dead in Christ to glory and immortality, will lead you to suspend your longing for her, till the morning and dawning of that day, when the archangel shall descend with a shout, to gather all his prisoners out of the grave up to himself. To believe this is best for you, and to be “ silent because he hath done it,” is your wisdom. It is much to come out

* S. Rutherford to Lady Kenmuir.

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of the Lord's school of trial, wiser and more experienced in the ways of God. Christ hath skill to do, and (if our corruption mar not) the art of mercy in correcting. We cannot of ourselves take away the tin, and lead, and scum that remaineth in us; and if the furnace go alone, and Christ the Master of the work, be not standing nigh the melting of his own vessel, the labour were lost, and the founder should melt in vain.*

REVEREND AND BELOVED IN THE LORD,

It may be I have been too long silent, but I hope you will not impute it to forgetfulness of you. As I have heard of the death of your daughter with heaviness of mind on your behalf; so I am much comforted, that she hath evidenced to yourself and other witnesses, the hope of the resurrection of the dead. As sown corn is not lost, so also is it in the resurrection of the dead; the body is *sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption*; *it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory*. I hope you wait for the crop and harvest. 1 Thess. iv. 14. *For if ye believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* Then they are not lost, who are gathered into that congregation of the first-born, and the general assembly of the saints. Though we cannot outrun nor overtake those that are gone before, yet we shall quickly follow them; and the difference is, that she hath the advantage of some months or years of the crown, before you and her mother. And we do not take it ill, if our children outrun us in the life of grace; why then are we sad, if they outstrip

* S. Rutherford to a Christian Friend, on the death of his wife.

us in the attainment of the life of glory? It would seem that there is more reason to grieve that children live behind us, than that they are glorified and die before us: all the difference is in some poor hungry accidents of time, less or more, sooner or later. So the godly child, though young, died an hundred years old, and you could not have bestowed her better, though the choice was Christ's, not yours. While she was alive, you could entrust her to Christ, and recommend her to his keeping: now, by an after-faith, you have resigned her unto him, in whose bosom do sleep all that are dead in the Lord. You would have left her to glorify the Lord upon earth, and he hath borrowed her, with promise to restore her again, to be an organ of the immediate glorifying of himself in heaven. Sinless glorifying of God is better than sinful glorifying of God. And sure your prayers concerning her are fulfilled.*

The good Husbandman may pluck his roses, and gather in his lilies at midsummer, and for ought I dare say, in the beginning of the first summer month; and he may transplant young trees out of the lower ground to the higher, where they have more of the sun, and a more free air at any season of the year. What is that to you or me? The goods are his own. The Creator of time-winds did a merciful injury, if I dare borrow the word, to nature, in landing the passengers early. They love the sea too well, who complain of a fair wind and a desirable tide, and a speedy coming ashore, especially a coming ashore in that land where all the inhabitants have everlasting joy.

* S. Rutherford to a Christian Brother.

upon their heads. He cannot be too early in heaven ; his twelve hours were not short hours. And, withal, if you consider this, had you been at his bed-side, and should have seen Christ coming to him, you would not ; you could not have adjourned Christ's free love, who would want him no longer. And, dying in another land, where his mother could not close his eyes, is not much. The whole earth is his Father's ; any corner of his Father's house is good enough to die in.*

It is faith's part to claim and challenge loving-kindness out of all the roughest strokes of God. Do that for the Lord, which you will do for time ; time will calm your heart at that which God hath done, and let our Lord have it now. What love you did bear to your friends now dead, let it be set upon Christ. It is much for our half-slain affections to part with that we believe we have right unto ; but the servant's will should be our will ; and he is the best servant who retaineth least of his own will, and most of his master's. Our Lord knoweth how to lead his own through the trials of time ; and seeing his mountains of brass, the mighty and strong decrees of free grace in Christ, stand sure, and the covenant standeth fast for ever, as the days of heaven, though he strike, his striking must be a very act of saving : for strokes upon his chosen ones come from the gentle hand of the heavenly Mediator, and his rods are steeped in that river of love that floweth from the heart of our soul-redeeming Jesus. Be content, and withal greedily covetous of grace, the interest and pledge of glory.

* S. Rutherford to Mrs. Taylor.

Seeing that time's thread is short, and you are upon the entry of heaven's harvest, the losses that I write of to your Ladyship are but summer showers, and the Sun of the New Jerusalem shall quickly dry them up ; and the rains of affliction cannot stain the image of God upon your soul, or alter the colour of his grace : and since you will not forsake him, who will not forsake you, I dare prophecy that daylight is near, when such a morning darkness is upon you ; and that this trial of your Christian mind towards Him, whom you dare not leave though he should slay you, shall close with a double mercy. It is a time for faith to hold more fast by Christ, and cleave more closely to him than ever ; for Christ loveth to be believed in and trusted to : the glory of laying strength upon one mighty to save, is more than we can think. That piece of service, of believing in a suiting Redeemer is a precious part of obedience : it is glory to him, when we lay our burdens upon him who purchased for us an eternal kingdom.*

The thorn is one of the most cursed and crabbed weeds that the earth yieldeth ; and yet out of it springeth the rose, the sweetest of flowers, and the most delightful to the eye that the earth hath ; your Lord shall make joy and gladness out of your afflictions ; for all his roses have a fragrant smell, and wait for the time when his own hand shall present them unto you. If you would have present comfort under the cross, be much in prayer ; for your grief taketh liberty to work upon your mind, when you are not busied in the meditation of the ever-delighting

* S. Rutherford to Lady Boyd.

and all-blessed Godhead. If you would lay the price you give, (which is but some few years of pain and trouble,) beside the commodities which you are to receive, you would see they are not worthy to be laid in the balance together; but it is *nature* which maketh you look what you give, and weakness of faith which hindereth you from seeing what you shall receive.*

DEAR SIR,

We sincerely sympathize with you and Mrs. S—— as to the afflicting bereavement which hath made your house a house of mourning; and we hope that the God of power and of love will make this a time of visiting you with those heavenly consolations, which are more precious than the most desirable earthly comforts, and which, like the tree cast into the waters of Marah, are able to sweeten the bitterest dispensations of Providence. The removal of your dear child calls you to follow him, in your thoughts and affections, into the glorious presence of God, where is the fulness of unknown and unmingled joys. It is your duty to endeavour to bow to the sovereign will of the great potter, who hath power over the clay, and to cry earnestly for that faith which the Spirit of God creates, and which gives realizing views of the heavenly country and of our way unto it, by the blood, the power, and the love of Jesus the Saviour.

Soon after I heard, by a letter from P——, of the child's death, I was led into such a view of his exalted blessedness in the other world, as filled me with a kind of inexpressible delight. But in order to the entertaining such pleasing ideas, it is necessary, as I

* S. Rutherford to Lady Kenmuir.

was then led to do, to come down into the valley of humiliation ; and to lay to heart the solemn discoveries of the malignity of our fallen state and nature, which are made by the early sufferings and death of such little ones. Suffer me further to remind you, that such a visitation as this is one of the strong methods used by the God of mercy, for pulling away from this poor world, your thoughts, affections, and concern. It is my desire, that in reference to this trial, you may know the sweetness of the compassion of Him who wept at the grave of Lazarus, and who amidst the joys of his exalted state, hath pity on the sorrows of bereaved parents ; and may it be given you to set your affections on heavenly things, and to walk daily as those who are indeed seeking a better country.*

DEAR SISTER-IN-LAW,

We were surprised with solemnity and grief, by the account of our affectionate and honoured mother, and cannot help feeling particular concern for your peculiar share of distress, in witnessing and bearing the immediate stroke of so afflicting a scene. Your sister was in some measure prepared for the news, by having been providentially engaged in this neighbourhood, in attending the sorrows of a widow whose husband was suddenly snatched away on the very day when, as we afterwards found, your mother died. When God opens the door into eternity, it becomes surviving mortals to be struck with awe. But blessed be God ! there are some instances of death, when the opening of the gates of eternity brings to those who

* Letters of the Rev. Dr. Love.

are left behind a glance of the splendour of the New Jerusalem, and a savour of that sweet fragrance of the paradise of God, where the sorrows of life and the pains of dissolution are soon swallowed up in the fulness of joy. Ideas of this sort have in some measure sweetened to me the removal of your mother from this world of darkness. And I sincerely wish you may be raised up, by infinite grace, to know by experience the inexpressible sweetness and power of such consolations. Indeed you can hardly ever have a more providential call than is now given you, to look seriously into the infinite realities of the spiritual world, in comparison of which the weightiest concerns of this fleeting life are mere shadows. To acknowledge this in words is common enough, especially under the present impression of such dispensations. But happy are they whom the light of saving faith carries so far out at such times into the glories of the unseen regions, as that they never afterwards can be contented to lie grovelling in the dust and mire of mere worldly gratifications, or forget that their treasure is above, in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb! It would give us high satisfaction, to see clear evidences of your being indeed called unto God's marvellous light, and brought near by the great sacrifice of atonement, to partake of that intercourse with the living God, and of that joy of salvation, which are improved and brightened, not extinguished, by the gloomiest trials, and which will spread a heavenly lustre over all natural and acquired accomplishments. In a little while we shall pass, each in the appointed season, into the world of spirits, where the two eternities shall open to us in their vast dimensions. What a joyful awakening, to feel the

divine embrace of Jesus, the lover and Saviour of souls, around the separated spirit, and to find love and pleasure darting from those eyes of his which shall burn as a flame of fire against the carnal and unbelieving. It is worth while to labour and to strive as in an agony, for making sure such a meeting with the Son of God on the other side of the expiring hour.*

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

I needed not your request to write to you, for ever since the tidings of your dear Father's chastening hand, my heart has bled with your heart, and longed to give expression to feelings of sympathy and love. Meanwhile, I am comforted with the reflection that even he who inflicted the blow is touched with the feeling of the infirmities which that blow has produced, and that from his own words flow the healing balm; to soften, alleviate and cure. And yet, this and many such like trials you have deliberately chosen as your portion, and even in the bitterness occasionally intermingled you have no disposition to repent of your choice, and I trust are mercifully kept from murmuring at the painful exercise of your lot. When you chose the Saviour for your trust, your friend, your all, you chose conformity to him, and he who guided you to this choice, from all eternity, had predestinated you to the high honor of this conformity. And surely you would not wish to leave out what is the highest glory of this conformity—conformity in suffering. Painful as sufferings were to him, so they will be to you. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and surely you would

* Dr. Love's Letters.

not miss the honor and the profit of being in the same school with him. Again, when the Lord directed your choice of the way to heaven, you chose a way of much tribulation, (Acts xiv. 22. Rev. vii. 14.) And do you repent of your choice? No, rather you cannot but love a way, every step of which is so distinctly marked by the footsteps of your best, your dearest friend.*

My heart is full, yet I must restrain it. Many thoughts which crowd on my mind, and would have vent were I writing to another person, would to you be unseasonable. I write not to remind you of what you have lost, but of what you have which you cannot lose. May the Lord put a word in my heart that may be acceptable; and may his good Spirit accompany the perusal, and enable you to say with the apostle, that as sufferings abound, consolations abound also by Jesus Christ. Indeed I can sympathise with you. But I have some faint conceptions of the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of the Lord, and may address you in the king's words to Daniel, *Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.* Motives for resignation to his will abound in his word; but it is an additional and crowning mercy, that he has promised to apply and enforce them in time of need. He has said, *My grace is sufficient for thee, and as thy day is so shall thy strength be.* This, I trust, you have already experienced. The Lord is so rich and so good, that he can, by a glance of thought, compensate to his children for whatever his wisdom sees fit to deprive them of. If he gives them

* Rev. C. Bridges to a Christian Friend.

a lively sense of what he has done for them and prepared for them, or of what he himself submitted to endure for their sakes, they find at once light springing up out of darkness, hard things become easy, and bitter sweet.

I remember to have read of a good man in the last century, who when his beloved and only son lay ill, was for some time greatly anxious about the event: One morning he staid longer than usual in his closet; while he was there his son died. When he came out his family were afraid to tell him; but, like David, he perceived it by their looks; and when, upon inquiry, they said it was so, he received the news with a composure that surprised them. But he soon explained the reason, by telling them that for such discoveries of the Lord's goodness, as he had been favoured with that morning, he could be content to lose a son every day. Yes, though every stream must fail, the fountain is still full, still flowing. All the comfort you ever received in your dear friend was from the Lord, who is abundantly able to comfort you still; and he is gone but a little before you. May your faith anticipate the joyful and glorious meeting you will have in a better world. Then your worship and converse together will be to unspeakable advantage, without imperfection, interruption, abatement or end. Then all tears shall be wiped away, and every cloud removed: and then you will see that all your concerns here below (the late afflicting dispensation not excepted) were appointed and adjusted by infinite wisdom and infinite love. The Lord who knows our frame does not expect or require that we should aim at a stoical indifference under his dispensations. He allows that

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afflictions are at present not joyous, but grievous ; yea, he was pleased when upon earth to weep with his mourning friends, when Lazarus died. But he has graciously provided for the prevention of that anguish and bitterness of sorrow which is upon such occasions the portion of such as live without God in the world ; and has engaged that all shall work together for good, and yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.*

I heartily thank you for yours, and hope my soul desires to praise the Lord on your behalf. I am persuaded that his goodness to you in supporting you under a trial so sharp in itself, and in the circumstances that attended it, has been an encouragement and comfort to many. It is in such apparently severe times that the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of the Lord, and the power and proper effect of his precious gospel are most eminently displayed. I would hope, and do believe that the knowledge of your case has animated some of the Lord's people against those anxious fears which they sometimes feel, when they look upon their earthly comforts with too careful an eye, and their hearts are ready to sink at the thought, What should I do, and how should I believe, were the Lord pleased to take away my desire with a stroke ? But we see he can supply their absence, and afford us superior comforts without them. The gospel reveals one thing as needful, the pearl of great price, and supposes that they who possess this are provided for against all events, and have ground of unshaken hope, and a source of never-failing conso-

* Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 32.

lation under every change they can meet with during their pilgrimage state. When his people are enabled to set their seal to this, not only in theory, when all things go smooth, but practically, when called on to pass through the fire and water, then his grace is glorified in them and by them, then it appears both to themselves and to others, that they have neither followed cunningly-devised fables, nor amused themselves with empty notions; then they know in themselves, and it is evident to others, that God is with them of a truth. In this view a believer, when in some good measure divested from that narrow selfish disposition which cleaves so close to us by nature, will not only submit to trials, but rejoice in them, notwithstanding the feelings and reluctance of the flesh. For if I am redeemed from misery by the blood of Jesus, and if he is now preparing me a mansion near himself, that I may drink of the rivers of pleasure at his right hand for evermore; the question is not (or, at least, ought not to be) How may I pass through life with the least inconvenience, but How may my little span of life be made most subservient to the praise and glory of him who loved me and gave himself for me? Where the Lord gives this desire he will gratify it, and as afflictions for the most part afford the fairest opportunities of this kind, therefore it is that those whom he is pleased most eminently to honour, are usually called at one time or another to the heaviest trials, not because he loves to grieve them, but because he hears their prayers and accepts their desires of doing him service in the world. The post of honour in war is so called, because attended with difficulties and dangers which few are supposed equal to; yet generals usually allot these hard ser-

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vices to their favourites and friends, who on their parts eagerly accept them as tokens of favour and marks of confidence. Should we not therefore account it an honor and a privilege, when the Captain of our salvation assigns us a difficult post; since he can and does (what no earthly commander can) inspire his soldiers with wisdom, courage and strength suitable to their situation. 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. I am acquainted with a few who have been led thus into the fore-front of the battle; they suffered much; but I have never heard them say they suffered too much, for the Lord stood by them and strengthened them.

Go on, my dear madam, yet a little while, and Jesus will wipe away all tears from your eyes; you will see your beloved friend again, and he and you will rejoice together.*

The dearest comforts are but short-lived, and the dearer they are when living, the deeper they cut when they are removed. Many of you can judge what the loss of a son, an only son, must be, and when there is no hope of a Seth instead of an Abel. But "behold he taketh away, and who shall binder him."

And she answered, *It is well.* Here is the greatest submission in the deepest distress; her son, her only son, the son of her love, the son of her old age, he is taken away with a stroke, and yet all is well. There is nothing amiss in the dispensation; had she been to choose it she would not have had it so, but as God has chosen it, it is well, it is best; she has nothing to object.

* Newton, p. 35.

What though God bereave you of children, friends, substance, health, "All is well." There is no empty void space, but what he himself fills up.*

My child is]not lost, though he is absent ; I shall go to him ; and wherein does there appear any thing hard, that one who is born from above, whose treasure is above, whose heart and conversation were above,—that God should satisfy the desire of his soul at once, and take him to himself ? It is well ; he is taken from the evil to come, he is gone to be with Christ, which is far better than to be here ; his race is soon run, his work is soon ended, but had he not been so soon ripe, he had not been so soon gathered. It is well for him, and well for me, for God will have more of my heart, my love, my trust, my praise now. The creature stole it away, and I perceived it not ; now the creature is taken, I find how I loved it ; Lord, I acquiesce.

Thou losest a child, a friend, a husband, or wife ; but thou hast not lost thy God : " In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." God hath said—" Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive ; and let thy widows trust in me."†

* Hill's "It is Well."

† Ibid.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RECOGNITION OF GLORIFIED SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

The prospect of a blessed re-union.

ONE of the most cheering sources of comfort to the believer under the loss of near and dearly-beloved friends and relations, is the glorious prospect of a happy re-union in a world where sin can never more mar their enjoyment of each other's society ; where death can never part them more. For the reasons which warrant the believer to cherish this blessed hope, we cannot do better than refer the reader to two most comforting and beautiful discourses upon this subject, by the Rev. Hugh White, in the 'Christian Examiner,' No. 35 and 47, published in Dublin.

There he says,—'I consider the recognition in heaven of those who, on earth, have loved in Christ, to be as certain as any thing can be which is not the matter of express revelation.' He proves that most satisfactory reasons may be assigned for the absence of such an express revelation on the subject in the word of God, without in the least de-

gree involving the supposition that the hope will not be fully realized.

He then proceeds,—‘O yes, we may indulge in the dream of happiness which is conjured up by the anticipated meeting before the throne with the best beloved of our hearts, to enjoy with them an eternity of inconceivable blessedness in the presence of a Saviour God ; and we may delight to think how unutterably sweet it will be, once more to gaze on that smile which shed such brightness on our pathway through this vale of tears, and once more to listen to that voice which poured such gladness into the inmost recesses of our heart, and once more to hold communion with that kindred spirit which heightened all our joys, and even sweetened all our sorrows, by rejoicing with us when we did rejoice, and weeping with us when we wept, provided always that we feel that the presence of the ever-blessed God would be so altogether, so infinitely sufficient for our perfect happiness, that even if this delightful dream should not be realised, and we should not be permitted to recognise among the crowd of glorified saints around the throne, those whom we had here so fondly loved, nor allowed to resume that sweet intercourse with them which here we had so intensely enjoyed, still —still, in gazing on a Saviour’s smile, revealing to our beatified spirits the unutterable tenderness of that love which led him to suffer and to die for our sakes, and in listening to a Saviour’s voice breathing the blessedness of heaven into our inmost souls, and in holding high and holy communion with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, we should feel our desires perfectly gratified, and our most enlarged capacities for enjoyment filled with a

happiness flowing from the triune God of our salvation, with which we should be fully and everlastingly satisfied !

Here there is a valuable test, by which we may judge whether our affections for those we love in Christ are kept within their legitimate boundaries ; for if our hearts can honestly stand *this* test—if we feel that to be with Jehovah Jesus, is so altogether the heaven of heavens in our estimation, that we are enabled to regard it as a matter of comparative unimportance who or what else may be there, since in him we shall be fully satisfied, then may we hope that we love the dearest earthly objects safely, and *then* may we allowably indulge in the anticipation of meeting and dwelling with them for ever, in heaven.

. . . . Oh ! were it not for this cheering hope, how would all the happiness, flowing from the sweet intercourse of Christian friends, be damped and darkened by the chilling thought, that each day, as it rolled along, was bringing them nearer to the time when this happiness must for ever cease, because, though inhabitants of the same heaven, they would know each other no more for ever !

How would it often come as a dark cloud over their brightest hours of hallowed communion, in which they so delighted to kindle in each other's hearts a warmer glow of grateful love to the God of their salvation ; to reflect that, after a few more years, or perhaps days, they must bid an everlasting farewell to this holy communion, and to all its pure and precious joys. While listening with holy gladness to the voice of some fondly-beloved one, speaking out of the fulness of the heart, of the matchless love of him who died for us, oh ! would it not check and

chill our gladdened feelings, with an irrepressible pang of exquisite agony, suddenly to have the thought forced upon us, that yet a little while and we shall hear that voice as the well-known voice of one we have fondly loved for years—we shall *thus* hear that voice—no more, for ever! We may know indeed that it is joining with us in the song of praise to the Lamb, but we shall not be able to distinguish it amidst the innumerable voices of the countless multitude before the throne, that swell the chorus of the anthem of the skies! Oh, would not this be an agonizing thought! On the other hand, how does it pour ten thousand-fold additional sweetness into all our intercourse with those we love in Christ, when we regard our communion with them here, but as the dawn of a bright eternal day of unclouded happiness and love. But it is when death—that relentless severer of all earthly ties—that ruthless destroyer of all earthly enjoyment—has separated us from those beloved ones, round whom our hearts were most fondly entwined, and with whom we so delighted to take sweet counsel, touching the things belonging to our everlasting peace,—oh! it is then pre-eminently that we feel the preciousness of that hope, which enables us to forget the anguish of the temporary bereavement, in the prospect of the happiness of the everlasting re-union which those who love the Lord are privileged to anticipate, as reserved for them in that land of life and immortality, where death shall never come to interrupt the blissful communion of its glorified inhabitants! When death has shrouded from our sight, for the “for ever” of earth, those whom we have most tenderly loved in Christ, and we call to our remem-

brance those sweet hours of hallowed communion we once enjoyed with them, and the thought comes overpoweringly on our minds, how their smile of fond affection used to brighten all our joys, and even all our sorrows too—and how their voice of sympathizing love used to cheer and gladden us, amidst all the wearying toils and trials of our earthly pilgrimage—and how their animating converse and example used to stimulate us to run, with increased ardour, the race set before us, and to press after higher degrees of conformity to the character, and devotedness to the service of God our Saviour ; Oh ! when such recollections as these crowd upon the memory, what intense, what overwhelming anguish would seize upon the soul, as the thought came over us, that we should *never again on earth* see that smile or hear that voice, in sorrow or in joy, were there no angel of mercy, no ministering spirit of consolation to whisper the soothing hope that though not on earth, still in a brighter world we *shall once more* gaze with fond delight on the smile of those beloved ones, whose death has flung such a deep shadow over all the scenes of earthly happiness—that we *shall once more* hear their voices, blending with our own in the song of praise “unto him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood !” And *then*, when we next shall behold and converse with them, no trace of sorrow will be seen lingering on their countenances—no accent of grief be heard trembling on their tongues ; but unmixed, unbounded gladness will shine forth in every feature of their glorified forms, and breathe in every tone of their rapturous voices—testifying to the fulness of joy which the presence of a Saviour God imparts!

. Oh, ye Christian mourners for the dead, that have fallen asleep in Jesus, whatever be the bereavement which has opened the flood-gates of sorrow in your souls! Ye orphan sons and daughters of "parents passed into the skies,"—ye afflicted parents, weeping for your children, and, like Rachel, too ready to refuse to be comforted, because they are not,—ye whose tears are flowing over a beloved sister's or brother's tomb,—ye who know all the loneliness and anguish of a widowed heart,—ye who have lost the friend of your bosom, that was the sharer and sweetener of your every sorrow and your every joy,—ye alone can adequately comprehend the comfort of that hope which assures you that yet a little while and those you have loved and lost shall once more gladden your spirits, by communion with them, in that happy country "which no enemy enters, and from which no friend ever departs." You know how it extracts the sting from sorrow, what healing balm it pours into your bleeding hearts, when the thought steals over you, as you are musing on the loved ones that have departed to be with Christ—"They shall not return to me;" and oh ! could I wish them back again in this world of woe! Would I drive them back, (if a wish of mine could accomplish it) from the peaceful haven where they now are, to be once more buffeted by the stormy waves of this troublesome world? Would I drag them from the Saviour's smile—from the fulness of joy in his presence, to renew their agonizing conflict with sin and sorrow in this vale of tears? No, no ! I feel that for their love

"Twould ill requite them to constrain
Their unbound spirits into bonds again."

But oh, blessed hope ! though they shall not return

to me, I shall go to them. A few more tossings on life's troubled sea, and I too shall have reached the haven of eternal rest! A few more painful steps in the wilderness, and I too shall be safely sheltered in my Father's house; there—oh, joy of joys! shall I see him face to face, “whom having not seen, I have loved, and rejoiced in him, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” To see *him*, to speak with *him*, to be for ever with *him*,—*this—this* is indeed to my soul, in its anticipations of future bliss, the very heaven of heaven! But, while I thus look forward with supreme delight to the prospect of dwelling for ever in the immediate presence of a Saviour God, as *alone* essential to my perfect felicity, oh! it is a source of *happy comfort*, to anticipate a re-union, in his presence, with those I have here most fondly loved in and for him—to anticipate the bliss of meeting and renewing the sweet intercourse of earth before his throne—joining with them in celestial converse of him, and of all his love—casting down together, at his feet, our blood-bought crowns of glory, and blending our voices in the song of everlasting praise—“Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, even the Father, to him, with the eternal Father and Spirit, Three Persons and One God, be all praise, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever. Amen?”

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRISTIAN CONSOLATION.*

*“Sorrow not, even as others, which have no hope.”—
1 Thess. iv. 13.*

CHRISTIAN mourner! whose heart is yet bleeding from the stroke of separation, inflicted by the hand of death, severing you from some beloved object, round whom your fondest feelings were entwined; I can indeed sympathize with your sorrow, for I have drunk deeply of this bitter cup of affliction, and fain would I administer, (if the Divine Comforter would vouchsafe to honour any humble hints which I may here suggest) to your consolation. I know indeed that it is God the Holy Ghost who is the only effectual comforter—that it is his exclusive prerogative to “bind up the broken-hearted, and comfort those that mourn in Zion,”—that he is himself the only and inexhaustible fountain of spiritual refreshment, and that it is by taking of the things of Christ, in whom are laid up all the treasures of Divine consolation as well as wisdom, that he accomplishes his gracious work as the comforter of the children of God.

* This chapter has been kindly contributed by the Rev. H. White, expressly for this work.

Still, as in his infinite condescension, he vouchsafes to employ the instrumentality of earthly channels, through which to convey his own most precious consolations to the soul of God's afflicted saints, in the hope that he will deign thus to bless this unpresuming labour of love; I would desire to address to you, Christian mourner, the following considerations, which may, I humbly trust, through his divine power, tend to cheer your drooping spirit, and to soften the anguish of your wounded heart!

Too well do I know how acute is that anguish,—how the soul sickens with an agonizing feeling of unutterable grief, when day passes over after day, and still the smile that once brightened every joy, comes not to gladden the heart, and the voice that once soothed, and even sweetened every sorrow, comes not to breathe the tender accents of sympathizing love over the desolated spirit! And I know how the wound which the healing balm of heavenly comfort, and the soothing influence of time, seemed to have almost closed, is ever and anon torn open afresh by some trivial incident, which forces with sudden and overwhelming power on the soul the sense of all it has lost—the memory of the joys of sweet intercourse and endearing affection, which once have been, but which shall be on earth no more again for ever!

And it is only those who have experienced it, that can at all comprehend the intensity of that anguish which suddenly seizes on the soul, when some comparatively unimportant circumstance, it may be the return of some day, or season of the year, consecrated in the history of the heart's affections—it may be some spot revisited, that was the scene of hallowed

happiness, in years gone by—it may be some unexpectedly discovered article, that once belonged to the beloved one for whom the bereaved heart mourns. Oh ! it is only the melancholy experience of such a heart, that can tell how apparently trivial may be the cause which can open afresh the flood-gates of sorrow in the soul, and bring back, as it were, in all the freshness of its first days of grief the bitterness of that bereavement which has made this world appear, in the eyes of the desolate mourner for the “lost of love,” a wilderness indeed !

But why, you will perhaps say, if I write to comfort ; why thus expatiate on the anguish of a bereaved and desolated heart ? To assure you, Christian mourner, that I do not undervalue the sorrow I would soothe, or attempt to administer consolation for trials I have never felt, and therefore cannot understand. And it may perchance dispose you to listen more patiently to my suggestions, when you reflect that they come from one who has been no stranger to the sufferings which he fain would desire to assuage.

The voice of a “brother in tribulation” will perhaps make its way more successfully to your heart, when he speaks of consolations which can support the Christian’s spirit under the heaviest load of grief that ever was laid on it by a chastening Father’s hand. The consolatory reflections which I would suggest are derived chiefly from two sources : one connected with those for whom you mourn—the other connected with him who has appointed the afflictive dispensation, in the very faithfulness and tenderness of his divine love.

In regard to the first, I will assume, in addressing

you as a child of God, that the objects of your affection for whom you mourn were united to you in the bonds of Christian as well as earthly love, that, like yourself, they were washed in the blood, clothed in the righteousness, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ; and that therefore you are privileged to believe, that while you are sorrowing for the loss of their endearing companionship, they are rejoicing in the presence of "God our Saviour" with joy indeed "unspeakable and full of glory!"

And must not *this* reflection check all immoderate sorrow, and mingle the sweetest consolation in your cup of grief? What was it which your love for them prompted you so earnestly to desire—so affectionately to endeavour by every means in your power to promote? Was it not their happiness? Well! is not this desire of your heart now fully accomplished? Do you not feel that the presence of a Saviour God must impart to them as full, as satisfying happiness, as even you could wish them to enjoy? Is it not enough, if not entirely to dispel, at least to gild the gloom of your sorrow on their account with gleamings of gladness, to think that your heart, in its fondest love, could not desire for them more unmixed felicity than they are now tasting in communion with him, face to face, amidst the glories of heaven, whose love gave to their souls a foretasted heaven, even upon earth? Can you not enter into the feelings of that good man who exclaimed under a similar bereavement, 'If God be satisfied, and his glorified creature be satisfied, who am I that I should be dissatisfied?'

True! you no longer see them smiling on you as once they were wont. But why? because they see

the Saviour smiling on them with that smile which gives to heaven itself all its glory, and all its bliss ! True ! they no longer tread the rough path of the world by your side, or pour into your ear the gladdening accents of their much-loved voice. But is it not because they are following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, beside living fountains of water in the Canaan above, and are blending their voices with the chorus of thanksgiving that bursts from the redeemed before the throne of God, and of the Lamb ? And though you can no more take sweet counsel with them here below, or go with them to the house of God in sweet companionship, to unite there in the Sabbath services of prayer and praise, oh ! must not your sorrow be comforted, that it touches on the very brink of rejoicing, when you remember why it is that they can no longer enjoy the dim and clouded light flowing from such counsel and companionship with you on earth, even because they are engaged in the sublime services of the celestial sabbath, and are basking in the full blaze of the sunshine of heaven !

And can you be so selfish as to desire, even if you had it in your power, to drag them back from the pure and perfect holiness and happiness of heaven to the sins and sorrows of earth ? Would you wish those eyes that looked so fondly on you, which are now gazing with inconceivable delight on the unveiled glories of a Saviour's countenance, to be deprived for your gratification of this beatific vision, and once more dimmed with tears, and ere long again darkened by death ? Would you wish that voice which breathed such love for you, and which is now thrilling with more than an angel's rapture, to unlearn for your sake the language of heaven, and once

more to take up the accents of earth—even the accents of lamentation and mourning and woe? Would you wish the feet which are now treading the soft green pastures of the celestial Canaan to be again lacerated with the thorns of this wilderness world—that you might again see those beloved ones toiling and fainting, sinning and suffering by your side? Is *this* your kindness to your friends? Is *this* your love for those whose happiness you often said was, if they could be separated, dearer to you than your own? Oh! strive to conquer this cruel selfishness of sorrow! Seek to attain to a more generous frame of mind, more worthy of the disinterested, the exalted character of Christian love! Seek to enjoy such a realizing view, and abiding remembrance of their unalloyed felicity, and such an unselfish delight in the contemplation of their blessedness, combined with such a cherished conviction of the cruelty it would be to them to drive them back from the haven of peace, where they are now so safely, so happily sheltered, to be once more buffeted by the storms of this troublesome world, that even if the tempting offer were made to you, that by a wish you could recall them from their mansions of bliss, you might be enabled to withstand a wish so full of unkindness to them, and exclaim with the Christian poet, in the language of his exquisitely touching apostrophe to a beloved and sainted mother:—

‘ Oh no, what here we call our life is such,
So little to be loved, and thou so much,
That it would ill requite thee to constrain
Thine unbound spirit into bonds again ! ’

Now *there* is indeed the language of genuine Christian love, triumphing over nature’s selfishness, in its

generous paramount solicitude for the beloved one's happiness.

Be assured, Christian mourner, the more habitually you cherish this frame of mind, the more abundant consolation will be poured into your heart, and the more will your sorrow assume a softened character, not unmixed with holy joy and thankfulness !

The association between your grief, and the joy of those for whom you mourn, will become so intimately blended together in your mind, that you will gradually experience the consolatory influence of the recollection that they are as happy as you could wish them to be ! This will, as it were, imperceptibly steal from your sorrow almost all its bitterness, and invest it with a soothing and sanctifying tenderness and sacredness derived from that heaven on which, as the abode of those beloved ones to whom your heart still so fondly clings, your thoughts habitually dwell ! And this will bring with it the gladdening reflection, that your separation from them is only for a season—it may be a very short season, and that your re-union with them, which cannot be far distant, will be for eternity ! The thought of heaven as their present home, will sweetly remind you, that ere long that blessed place will be your home also ; and that there in your Father's house, you shall dwell with those you have loved in Christ, for ever and ever ! Weep not Christian mourner, as if you thought that you shall see them no more ; or that their voice shall never again cheer, their smile never again gladden you ! This must be indeed the fearful foreboding of all mere earthly love ; but the love which a Saviour has with his own hand linked round his people's hearts, is not destined thus like the things of earth

to wither and to die! No, no! it receives from his touch the impress of immortality. Like the inheritance which he has purchased for his people, it is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, but abideth for ever, eternal in the heavens." Heaven is the birth-place of such love, and heaven shall be its eternal home! It has been kindled by the breath of the Eternal Spirit, and he will keep the flame which partakes of his own nature burning for ever! Yes, Christian mourner for the dead who have died in the Lord! yet a little while and you shall be re-united to the 'lost of love.' Yet a little while, and you shall see them, and hear them, and converse with them once again. And, oh! what a glorious transformation shall have passed over them and you, before that blissful meeting takes place! Both shall have bidden an eternal farewell to sin and sorrow. Both shall have accomplished their warfare, and come off more than conquerors by the blood of the Lamb, and the power of his grace. Both shall have been admitted into his immediate presence, and privileged to behold the King in his beauty, and to converse with him face to face. Believe! what a blissful meeting with those who have entered on that world of blessedness before you, shall you ere long enjoy amidst *such scenes* and *such associations*! Can you, with such a prospect before you, refuse to be comforted? Can you with such a meeting in view, mourn with immoderate sorrow your temporary separation?

But especially habituate yourself to dwell, with delightful anticipation, on the "glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour," when those you have loved and lost, and yourself, with all his saints shall appear with him in glory. This is the prospect to

which the apostle directs the view of his Thessalonian converts, mourning for beloved ones who had fallen asleep in Jesus, when he would comfort them amidst the anguish of recent bereavement! It is in the anticipation of the second coming of the Lord, when the dead in Christ shall be raised with glorified bodies, and the saints then living on the earth shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and all shall be together and thenceforward for ever with the Lord, that St. Paul desires the Thessalonian mourners not to sorrow, even as others who have no hope; but to comfort one another by speaking of that day of promised glory to Christ, and to all his church. Christian mourner! I would fain echo the apostle's exhortation, and entreat of you abidingly to keep that day in your remembrance, more especially now, when the signs of the times are so peculiarly startling, and apparently precursory of some rapidly approaching crisis in the history of the Christian church. It may now be said with an emphatic propriety, that we know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man may come; and therefore instead of grieving with sinfully excessive sorrow, for those whom the Lord will bring with him, in the day of his appearing, we should be entirely engrossed in maintaining an attitude of constant watchfulness and preparedness for that day, having our loins girded, and our lamps burning, and our souls looking out, with devout desire for the appearing of the Lord. Oh, think of what you will feel in that day, when you shall see those beloved forms, which last you saw wasted with sickness, clouded with sorrow, shrouded in death, now all radiant with the brightness of celestial bliss, and ex-

ulting in the consciousness of immortal vigour. Made like unto the Redeemer's glorious body ! Shall see their brows wreathed like your own with a crown of light and glory ; and shall hear their voices blending with your own, in the song of praise to Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb !

With what inconceivable delight will you then converse together, of all the endearing remembrances of your earthly intercourse ; and trace the bright impress of a Saviour's love on every step of your earthly pilgrimage ! How will you rejoice, with a joy surpassing in one sense the joy of angels, when casting your blood-bought crowns together at your beloved Redeemer's feet—joining together in the worship of the celestial sanctuary—following together the footsteps of the Lamb through all the glories of the New Jerusalem—and uniting together in the anthem of thanksgiving which all his ransomed people shall unceasingly lift up before his throne !

Do you really believe that *such* a prospect awaits you ? That *such* a meeting with those for whom you mourn is reserved for you ? And must not the sorrow of present separation, which is but for a few days, be altogether swallowed up in grateful joy at the anticipation of such a re-union, which is to last for ever and ever ? And shall not the language of your heart, as these blissful prospects pass before you, be breathed forth in the Psalmist's resolution, “ While I live I will praise the Lord ; yea, as long as I have any being I will sing praises unto my God.”

And tell me if they for whom you mourn, could look on you from their abodes of bliss, would they not rejoice far more to hear you praising their God with thankful joy on their behalf, than to see you brood-

ing with sinful sorrow over the shortlived separation death has made? And if they could speak to you, would they not call on you, by all the love you bore them, not to waste an hour of your precious time in unavailing grief at their removal, but to spend its every moment in grateful efforts to promote the glory of their Father and your Father, of their God and your God? For, Never, never, would they say, till you reach this blessed place, can you have any adequate conception of what you owe to a Redeemer's love, and how you should feel every moment wasted that is not employed in some effort to glorify him in your heart, in your home, in your neighbourhood, in your native land, and in the world.

2. In connection with the second source of comfort to which I am desirous to direct your attention, I would observe, that it should be regarded by you as a cause of peculiar consolation, under the afflictive bereavement for which you mourn, that it is appointed by him, who has manifested for you, on Calvary's cross, a love which indeed passeth all understanding, and that it is designed by him to accomplish some of the most gracious purposes of that love. Surely it is well calculated to blunt the edge of your sorrow, and to mingle the sweetest comfort in your bitter cup of grief, when you reflect that the stroke comes not from the cruel hand of an enemy, but from your own Saviour's tender loving hand, and is not inflicted by him in anger, but is sent by him on an errand of love, which ought to turn your sighs of lamentation into songs of praise. What may be peculiar in your case, which called for *this* manifestation of your dear Redeemer's love, I cannot tell, but there are some obvious and universally applicable lessons of loving-

kindness, which, in every such affliction of his people, it is his gracious purpose to impress upon their hearts. I may therefore without hesitation affirm, that by the bereavement which he has appointed for you, he has designed to draw your heart closer to himself—to give you a fuller display of his own divine loveliness and present sufficiency for your happiness, independently of all creature-love and creature-enjoyments—to impart to you a sweeter experience of the tenderness of his sympathy, and the preciousness of his consolations—to inspire you with a keener relish for prayer, his own word, his sabbath services, and every divinely appointed means of communion with himself—to bestow on you an increased measure of conformity to his own character, participation in his own Spirit, and meetness for the inheritance which he has purchased for you with his own blood—to wean your affections and desires from earth, and fix them with more concentrated intensity on heaven—and to put within your reach the most precious opportunity which your heart could desire, of testifying to his infinite faithfulness, love, and power—of proclaiming, in a language that cannot be mistaken or undervalued, even by the most careless of the children of the world, the preciousness of his gospel, as displayed in the consolation it imparts; and thus most effectually glorifying his dear and honoured name.

And will you, child of God, as far as in you lieth disappoint your dear Redeemer's gracious design, and do all you can, by the indulgence of excessive sorrow, to defeat the purposes of his love? Will you cruelly rob your own soul of all the consolations which he desires to impart, and which the Comforter, if you earnestly implore his gracious influences, will

so delight to bestow,—by brooding over your bereavement with an unmitigated anguish which refuseth to be comforted? And above all, will you ungratefully fling away the opportunity of glorifying Him who died for you, which your affliction puts within your reach, and which ought to make you welcome it with cordial gratitude, as a precious means of shewing forth your thankfulness for all his love? Oh, will you allow the world to say, that, as far as they can judge by what they see in you, there is no such peculiar comfort supplied by the gospel to the children of affliction as to make them much covet an interest in its privileges or promises? Is this the estimate you will allow them to form, from an observation of your conduct, of the Saviour's preciousness? Is this the return you will make to him for all his love?

'Tis true, one of the most refreshing streams which gladdened your earthly pilgrimage, is dried up; but is the fountain of all refreshment dried up also? And will you even seem to say, 'Since that stream no longer flows, even Jehovah Jesus himself, the fountain of all felicity, cannot refresh or comfort my soul?' Will you even appear to warrant the dishonouring insult to a Saviour's all-sufficiency and a Saviour's love, offered to him by that immoderate grief which says, that, because a worm has withered your gourd of earthly delight, under whose shadow you reposed so pleasantly, you can find no tranquillizing peace, no satisfying joy, under the shadow of a Saviour's wings? Are his Almighty arms unable to support you, because some earthly prop has been taken away? Can any earthly sorrow rob you of the divine comfort of the Holy Ghost? And is there that object of earthly love whose loss can make desolate a heart,

where He ‘ who fills a crowded heaven with blessedness’ vouchsafes to dwell? What! your heart, Christian mourner, the abode of the blessed triune God, and yet uncomforted! Oh, give not the enemies of your God such occasion to blaspheme his holy name! Shew them that the heart where he has fixed his dwelling-place is made by his inhabitation a miniature of heaven, and can never be deprived of its blessedness by any of the bereavements of earth. That no darkening of earthly smiles can cloud the sunshine of that soul which is irradiated by the beamings of a Saviour’s smile. That no silence of earthly voices can leave uncomforted that heart to which a Saviour’s voice speaks peace and joy. And that no death of earth’s dearest objects can destroy the happiness of that heir of immortality who enjoys the everlasting friendship of the living God. Surely, Christian, if you can say with truth, “ O God, thou art my God,” there can be no worm of the dust, however deservedly dear, whose death can prevent you from rejoicing in your God with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Yea, ought not the death of earth’s dearest ones only to endear to you still more than ever the Friend who cannot die? Tell me, has the loss of *their* companionship given you more of *His*? Has the withdrawal of *their* sympathy cast you more entirely on *His*? And have you experienced more of the manifestations of his love, since the endearments of theirs were torn from you by death? If this be so—if you have leant more confidingly on his arm, since theirs was withdrawn—if you have heard his voice more frequently and more tenderly, telling you of all his love for you, since theirs was buried in the silence of the grave—and if in the gloom which the

clouding of their smile has gathered round you, you have seen *His* beaming more brightly on your soul,— O tell me, Christian mourner, must you not with tears of gratitude confess, that you have gained immeasurably by your loss? That Jehovah Jesus has infinitely more than made up to you for all you have been deprived of; yea, has repaired the loss you have sustained, with infinite increase of happiness to your soul, by the increased displays he has vouchsafed to you of his own preciousness and presence? Can you hesitate gratefully to acknowledge this, if he has filled up with himself the void left in your heart by the beloved one's death? And if he has not, the fault, believer, is entirely your own. This was his gracious purpose, in tearing from your heart the object round which its affections were perhaps too closely twined. And was it not indeed a purpose of love, worthy of himself, to empty you of a little earthly enjoyment, that you might be filled with all the fulness of God? In what do you conceive the very essence of heaven's happiness to consist? Is it not in the unclouded vision, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of the ever-blessed God, producing a continually increasing assimilation to his character, delight in his service, and happiness in his love? Now then ought you not to welcome *whatever* brings more of the foretasted happiness of heaven within your reach, during your pilgrimage on earth, no matter of *what* sources of earthly enjoyment you may be thereby deprived? And is it not the direct tendency of the bereavement with which you have been visited to produce this blessed result? And can you doubt that if you pray fervently, that the Holy Spirit, the Divine Comforter, may thus sanctify the afflictive dispensa-

tion to your soul, he will graciously hear your prayers, and enable you to enjoy infinitely more in Christ, than you have lost in the dearest object of earthly love? So that paradoxical as it may appear to the children of the world, you will be enabled to realize the experience of many of the children of God, and to feel and gratefully confess that the purest, the most exalted happiness you have ever tasted, has been enjoyed by you since the stroke of death dashed the whole fabric of your earthly happiness in ruins to the ground!

Is it not for the very purpose of suggesting to your mind the consolatory consideration, that whatever you have lost by the death of those you have loved, God your Saviour is both able and willing to repair the loss with infinite increase of gain? Is it not for this very purpose that he has been pleased, in the stupendous condescension and tenderness of his divine love, to reveal himself as standing towards you in every endearing relationship of earthly love? Do you mourn for a parent passed into the skies? He is the Father of the fatherless; he watches over his children with more than the tenderest mother's love. Is yours the desolation of a widowed heart? Behold, thy Maker is thy Husband; and what terrestrial love can for one moment be compared with the celestial love of the Heavenly Bridegroom of the church? Is it a brother for whom you grieve? And is not he the elder Brother of the whole family of the redeemed; and what can you desire in a brother's love that you will not find in infinite perfection in his? Or have you been parted by death from the friend of your bosom, the tenderly sympathizing sharer and sweetener of all your joys and all your griefs? And can

the sorrow of separation from that friend make you even for one moment forgetful of the Friend from whom nothing shall ever separate you—the Friend who has loved you with an everlasting love ; who left the throne of his glory, and stooped to the death of the cross, to purchase for you an immortality of boundless bliss ? Oh ! have you not found that *this* is indeed the Friend that is born for adversity ? Has not affliction as it were additionally endeared you to him ? Has he not allured you into the wilderness, that *there* he might speak comfortably unto you ? Has he not dealt so very tenderly and compassionately with you, since your season of tribulation commenced, sending the Comforter, the Blessed Spirit, abidingly to fill your heart with his peace and joy ; that you have been made to feel as if you had known nothing before of the power of his love, or the preciousness of his great salvation,—so increasingly have the communications of his grace, in tenderness of affection and richness of consolation, exceeded all you had experienced before ? And if such has been the result of your affliction (and you must have been strangely unfaithful to him, and unkind to yourself, if it has not been so), have you not much more cause for rejoicing than for sorrowing ? And ought not the accents heard breathing from your lips to be not those of lamentation and mourning, but those of thanksgiving and praise ?

And farther, Christian mourner, I entreat of you to reflect, that you are indebted to this same Heavenly Friend for that hope of an everlasting reunion with those whom you have here loved in him, which takes the sting out of your sorrow on their behalf, and well nigh turns it into joy ; that he has purchased this

cheering hope for them and for you with his own most precious blood and infinitely meritorious righteousness, which he wrought out for them and for you in the days of his flesh ; that it cost him that mysterious agony in the garden, that accursed death upon the cross, to secure for them and for you an eternity of happiness, to be enjoyed together in his presence ! When you reflect on *this*, oh ! must not gratitude to him constrain you to merge all immoderate sorrow in affectionate solicitude to glorify him, in the eyes of all around, by walking closely in his footsteps—living devotedly to his glory, and especially by such a submission—yea, even cheerful deportment under your trial, as will proclaim to all who know you, more convincingly than the most powerful arguments—more impressively than the most eloquent appeals could do, that he, in whom you have been taught to trust, as your Comforter as well as Saviour, is indeed a very present help to his people in every time of trouble, and *does* cheer them with divine consolations, and support them with Almighty strength, so that, gladdened by his everlasting love, and sustained by his everlasting arms, they lift up their grief-bowed heads with a cheerful smile, and go on their heavenward way rejoicing ! *This* will indeed glorify him ! and, tell me, does he not deserve *this* at your hands ?

CHAPTER XIX.

GENERAL ARGUMENTS FOR CHEERFUL ACQUIESCENCE IN THE WILL, AND FILIAL CONFIDENCE IN THE DEALINGS OF GOD.

The love and faithfulness of God.

Psalm cxix. 75. Heb. xii. 6. Rev. iii. 19.

BEFORE we can hope to enjoy any solid peace and comfort in the hour of affliction, it is absolutely necessary that we should know from whom the trial comes, and for what end it is sent. We must recognise God as the *Author of affliction*, and we must acknowledge his purposes in sending it, to be those of infinite and unchanging *love*.

Now why this anxiety in a God of love to stand thus forward as the author of misery; and misery, observe, among the people he loves the most? For two reasons; first, because we are so backward in affliction to discern his hand. We say indeed when it comes, “It is the work of God;” but we do not half believe what we say; we have no deep or lively

impression of its truth. There is often lurking within us a conviction directly opposed to it. Else why that restless anxiety in trouble to look so closely into second causes? Why are our minds continually going over the circumstances that have led to our calamities? Why does one of us say—"Had this been left alone, my buried friend might have been spared?" And another, "Had that been done, my poor child might not have sunk?" And a third, "In any other situation, my withered health might have stood firm?" There may be some truth in all this, but the incessant dwelling of our minds on it, shews how we labour to push God out of our concerns, how unwillingly our vile hearts are in all situations to acknowledge or even perceive his hand.

But he has another reason for ascribing to himself our trials; we can get no good out of affliction, no real comfort under it, till we view it as sent to us from him. The man of the world regards affliction as "coming forth of the dust," and trouble as "springing out of the ground." It is the necessary result, he conceives, of our present condition and circumstances. And where is the benefit that he derives from sorrow? It works in him no submission, it brings out of him no praise. It is when the mind discovers God at the very root of all its sufferings; when it sees him desolating its comforts, and robbing it of its joys with his own hand; when every grave seems dug by him, and every loss and every pang are felt to be his work; when it cannot banish him from its thoughts, nor disconnect from him one of its griefs, nor even wish to do either; it is then that the soul begins to bethink itself, and the heart to soften, and man's proud, rebellious, stubborn spirit

to give way. Then the knee bends, and the prayer goes up, and the blessing comes down. Then, for the first time, we are quieted and subdued: "I was dumb," said David, "and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." "It is the Lord," said Eli; and then that poor old parent could add—"Let him do what seemeth him good." And this conviction will carry us yet farther. Only let a man once see that a Father's hand has mingled his cup of bitterness, and he will soon do more than say, "Shall I not drink it?" His heart may be half breaking, but there is something within that heart, which, ere he is aware, will force his lips to praise. "The Lord gave," said Job, "and the Lord hath taken away;" and then comes this noble, but natural exclamation, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."*

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Psalm xxx. 5.

It is most profitable, yea, blessed, to have right conceptions of the Lord's dealings with his people. Jesus is everlastingly pursuing one plan of love; and never, in a single instance, departs from it. But as we see only part of his ways until the result come, exercises by the way much perplex our poor short-sighted view of things. Jesus, for the most part, brings his people into the wilderness, in order to speak comfortably to them there. But while in the wilderness we are at a loss to trace the footsteps of his love. And when, after some sweet love-tokens of his favour, new trials arise; though Jesus, it should seem, designed by the mercy to prepare for trouble,

* Bradley's Sermons,—"The Christian in the Wilderness."
Hosea ii. 14, 15.

yet by our false interpretation of it, we aggravate the trouble, and make it greater. My soul ! do learn from the precious thoughts suggested by the scripture now before us, to form a right estimate of thy Lord's dealings with thee : " Weeping may endure for a night." It may appear a long night, a wearisome night ; but remember, it is but a night. Every hour, yea, every moment is shortening it, and when the morning comes, joy will come with it. And in proportion to the darkness or the sorrow of the night, the day-light will be more delightful. The most blessed discoveries Jesus makes of himself are generally those after a sorrowful night. Precious Lord ! be thou thyself the " day-dawn " and the " day-star " to my soul, after a night of painful exercise ; yea, be thou the Sun of Righteousness with healing in thy wings ! And then, neither the night of sleep nor the night of death will be more than the passing hour. And, Lord ! when I awake, I shall be still with thee.

Nothing so powerfully reconciles to affliction as this assurance. Oh, if we can but hear God saying to us, with the chastening, " My son ; " if we can but realize *love* toward us, in the dispensation ; then, though the stroke be grievous, though the wound will smart still, it will no longer be to us what it was. A sense of *love* in it, will make it tolerable, when nothing else can. This will enable us, at times when faith is strong, even to *bless* him for affliction ; to exult in the thought, that he has not let us alone, nor left us (as he leaves many) at our ease, to go on in folly. I do not say this will always be the case. It is well sometimes, when we can do as we read of Aaron, " Aaron held his peace :" and when we can be *still*, and refrain from complaining

against God. But there are seasons, when the Christian can rise above this; when he can take up that word of the Psalmist—"I will sing of mercy and of judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." Psa. ci. 1.

May God put this song into the hearts of his afflicted ones before him! "He giveth songs in the night :" gives his children, even while the affliction lasts, some sweet tokens along with it of their adoption, and of his gracious purposes toward them, by it. "I know the thoughts that I think toward thee, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give thee an expected end." Jer. xxix. 11. He reminds them, that if they suffer with him, they shall also be glorified together. He makes them, by it, partakers of his holiness : and then he takes them to himself, puts an end to their wilderness-experience, gives them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

"Whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth," &c.*

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."

Here is work enough for faith to believe that all that God doth is in mercy and faithfulness. We can hardly believe this upon trying occasions.

Our reason and feelings call nothing mercy, but what suits our ideas of things ; gratifies our feelings, &c. When the Lord gives things that delight the senses, every mouth can say, "The Lord is merciful !" But when he afflicts and distresses, none but those whose eyes have been anointed with eyesalve, who can see the Lord ruling in heaven and earth, watch-

* Hawker's "Evening Portion."

ing over every hair of the head, can say, ‘This is nothing but mercy.’ If you bear the Christian character, brother, be assured that nothing will meet you on this side death, in death, and beyond death, but mercy. “*All* the paths;” I do hope this word strikes through the hearts of God’s children: we say *some*, God says **ALL**. We find it difficult to believe that heavy bitter trials are mercies. When the Lord lays affliction on our loins, when he takes away the beloved of our hearts, when he deprives us of health, property, &c., it is very difficult to say, This is mercy. Nature will never learn this lesson. If God takes you from a farm house to a cottage, it is difficult to call that mercy; yet who has done it? While nature calls nothing mercy but what the flesh likes, faith has learned a harder lesson. We do not know what God intends towards us: we look at one act, God sees the whole plan; we look at one link in the chain, and this viewed alone is painful, dreadful; we wish it out, but oh! take care how you speak to God about taking this out. Were this link taken out you might lose the whole chain of mercy. Oh! may my soul learn to leave all more quietly in the Lord’s hands. We are hasty and foolish; we know no more what God is bringing about than Joseph did when he went down weeping to Egypt. Let us wait to see the end of the Lord. Solomon says, “The end of a thing is better than the beginning. What was a sore trial in the beginning may end in everlasting joy. We sow in tears, reap in joy: what makes you weep bitterly on earth, shall make you sing loudly in heaven; yea, that very thing which tries and pains you most severely, shall make you praise and triumph most joyfully hereafter. You shall then see mercy in that

particular trial; you shall know how kind the Lord was when he made you weep your very heart out. Trials may be piercing sufferings, very acute; but it is the Lord. When feelings are tortured, when the heart bleeds, we are ready to say, can this be mercy? How is this a token of God's love? Surely it had been a kindness to have left me what he has now taken away. Wait a little while, and you will see what God means by it. It is the appointed means to accomplish the purpose of God towards you. Do not you know what great blessings come out of great trials? Had you been in the plains of Judea—had you seen the Lord there, with the poor blind man standing before him, had you seen Jesus mixing up the clay, and spreading it on the blind man's eyes, you would have said, What is he doing? He is indeed going to put out the poor man's eyes. But this is the appointed way to cure him. So God often seems to deal with us in ways more likely to take away the comforts we have, than to increase or secure them. But we are poor creatures of a day, and our wisdom is ignorance. Had we seen Lazarus, full of sores, laid at the rich man's gate, we should have been ready to say, "Surely this cannot be mercy." But look in a few days—Lazarus is not at the rich man's gate, but in the bosom of Abraham, in God's firmament, as brilliant as a star in glory. See John banished to a desert island. We might have called this cruel; might have said, the Lord forgets John, &c. Then read the 1st of Revelations; see the brilliant amount of what John enjoyed. The Lord's plan was laid, the place and time fixed in which he would manifest himself to this beloved disciple. Again, had we seen the disciples out at night upon

the great deep, we should have been ready to say, "If the Lord will give them a quiet sea, it will be a great mercy." But no, the Lord raises a mighty tempest. But it is in the storm that he comes to them. Then is not the storm a mercy?

Once more. What bringeth us to know our need of God's help, but when we are sunk in trials and sorrows, where none beside can help us. Now Christians, I appeal to you; did you ever find God so near to you, as in the deepest trials? Did you ever so gladly receive him as then? I know not what may afflict this soul of mine before I go to rest, but whatever it may be, may I remember in the trying hour, "*All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.*" May we be enabled to give God credit for this, whatever we may feel;—and the Christian must feel. But if he even slay us with suffering, if we die at his feet, may we believe it is all mercy. David had stronger faith than we; he could say, "It is of very faithfulness that thou hast afflicted me." His paths are also truth. By this we understand that they shall accomplish what he has promised. Well, and what has he promised? Why, one of the things which he has promised is *affliction*; another thing is, that he will be with his people in trouble. He says to them, "*When thou passest through the fire, I am with thee; it shall not hurt thee.*" "*When thou art in deep waters mine arm shall hold thee up.*" "*Leave all to me, I will sustain thee.*"

He never made a promise, but it is as firm as a rock; and he has promised strength and support in every time of trouble. Did he not say, "*As thy day, so shall thy strength be?*" And with every temptation he will make a way to escape? There is one promise

not fulfilled, but it shall be: he will bring his people out of *all* their afflictions.*

"All these things are against me."

While we are inhabitants of this world, one part of our employment should be to study the ways of God's providences. I know of no employment more profitable. They are frequently mysterious and dark, the end may be hidden from us, but it is not from God; and in all his dealings with his people the end is gracious and blessed; but the ways that lead to that end are often dark and unintelligible, till God explains them.

This was a dark time with Jacob; there were dark clouds on every hand, yet the design of love and mercy was carried through the whole of this mysterious plan; his family was in a bad state, old age was pressing upon him, infirmities encompassed him; he had a long journey to take to escape from the famine that had surrounded him, and he exclaims, no doubt with much bitterness of soul, "All these things are against me." But he made a great mistake; not one of these things was against him; and Jacob would allow at last that there was a gracious end in all, and that the benefit was for ever.

There is nothing against men, till men are against God. If a man is with God, all the providences of God are with him. Often read the ways of God; there are nothing like them. His thoughts are not like our thoughts; they are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Oh for that wisdom to bring our minds into sweet

* Jones's Fragments, p. 132.

quietness, when the Lord is to all appearance writing bitter things against us ! We have innumerable examples to teach us that God has a point in view, and that the way he takes to arrive at this point seldom pleases us ; but when he has finished his plan, the Christian will fall at his feet, and adore and praise him for all the steps he has pursued to bring him to this end. I can mention but a few instances : the woman of Canaan. The Lord had a blessed end in view ; how did he bring it about ? He sends bitter afflictions into the family—her daughter shall be bruised and tormented. There is no appearance of love in all this. The world says, " All this is against me ; " but how does it turn out ? Satan is cast out and conquered, the woman is triumphant ; the Lord says, " Go in peace." When the Lord sends the most bitter afflictions into a family, he has a point ; not one affliction, but with a view to some end. Paul's thorn, whatever it might be, was exceedingly grievous to him ; three times does he beg the Lord to take it away. The Lord does not do that, but he does something better : he cries to him from heaven, "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*" Paul is content. To honour, God is conducting his chosen Israel : but mind, it is through the wilderness. They wanted to go by a short cut. No ; forty years shall they be about that which might have been done in a few days. The Lord had an end. "*He led them by a right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.*" Canaan is the land in view, but through a howling wilderness they must go to it ; the heaven of heavens is the point for the people of God ; but how do they travel home ? Does the Lord indulge them with every thing, and gratify their feelings ? Does he give them an easier

way than others? No, quite the contrary; through ten thousand trials they shall go. Satan shall be let loose upon them, to sift them; the furnace shall be prepared, that when they come out of it, they may be found purified.*

"As many as I love I rebuke and chasten."

We should study the ways of God; all suffering comes from God; we should consider it as a rebuke. But who are thus rebuked? All whom God loves. The ungodly may be punished, but not rebuked in love.

Earthly parents often let their children go without the rod, and then the Lord often takes the children, and makes rods of them for the parents. An earthly parent often spares the child he loves most; but not so the Lord. Those whom he most loves he will take most pains to chasten. Who so deep in tribulation as Joseph, Daniel, Jeremiah, Paul, &c. Above all, God could love none like his own Son, yet who went through so much suffering? When God refuses to correct, he means to destroy. "If ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated; yet Jacob is the man of sorrows, Esau is living at his ease. Joseph was the most beloved of all the brethren, yet Joseph is the sufferer. Lazarus was loved, Dives was hated. But where is Lazarus? lying on the earth covered with sores, destitute of bread. The Lord says, I have among you an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. If he means to spare his people, he does not spare the rod. He

* Jones's Fragments, p. 109.

chooses his people, where? in prosperity? No, "in the furnace of affliction." Happy the man whom God correcteth.

Remember you are under a wise Physician, who means to take away the disease; this is all the fruit, to take away sin. Read the 12th of Hebrews. God has no pleasure in seeing his children in the furnace, but for their profit. Many have said "it is good for me that I have been afflicted." The blessed effects of afflictions prove that they are sent in love. God has many wise ends in view; but the Christian says, How am I to know that the Lord corrects me in love? An important inquiry this. You say, Were I certain of this, I would not only be dumb with David, but I would say with Luther, 'Lord, rebuke and chasten.' Well, you are to know by the effects. Does the Lord bring you nearer to himself by correction? Do you cleave more unto Christ? Do you wait on the Lord more constantly? Is there more meekness, more resignation, more deadness to the world, &c.? If so, you need not ask whether the Lord corrects in love. If the bitter things make Jesus more sweet, more precious, be sure there is love in them. Has he frowned upon you in the world? What have these frowns done? have they convinced you that this is not your rest? Another benefit. Jesus is nearer to his people in trouble; his heart is drawn out towards them—they are in the secret of his pavilion; and if you have new lessons in affliction, which you could not or would not learn in prosperity, is it not sent in love? Again, if you find when you are in the furnace, that you are willing to continue there till God's end is answered, this is well. When the ungodly are in trouble, all their desire is to get out of it; they look not for

any benefit: but it is the reverse with the children of God. The godly, when they are afflicted, groan more under the burden of their sins than under their sufferings.

The Lord sends affliction; let us receive his message though he treats us roughly. His message is "Come nearer to the Lord." The last thing we hear of the afflicted is, "The Lord delivered them out of all their troubles." The afflictions are for a time, not for eternity.*

I heard of your affliction, and of the Lord's goodness to you. Blessed be his name! he is all sufficient and faithful; and though he cause grief, he is sure to shew compassion in supporting and delivering. Ah! the evil of our nature is deeply rooted and very powerful, or such repeated continual corrections and chastisements would not be necessary; and were they not necessary we should not have them. But such we are, and such must be our treatment; for though the Lord loves us with a tenderness beyond what the mother feels for her sucking child, yet it is a tenderness directed by infinite wisdom, and very different from that weak indulgence which in parents we call fondness, which leads them to comply with their children's desires and inclinations, rather than to act with a steady view to their true welfare. The Lord loves his children, and is very indulgent to them, so far as they can safely bear it, but he will not spoil them; their sin-sickness requires medicines, some of which are very unpalatable; but when the case requires such, no short-sighted entreaties of

* Jones's Fragments, p. 323.

ours can excuse us from taking what he purposes for our good. But every dose is prepared by his own hand, and not one is administered in vain, nor is it repeated oftener than is needful to answer the purposed end. Till then no other hand can remove what he lays upon us; but when his merciful design is answered, he will relieve us himself, and in the meantime so moderate the operation, or increase our ability to bear, that we shall not be overpowered. It is true, without a single exception, that all his paths are mercy and truth to them that fear him. His love is the same when he wounds as when he heals, when he takes away, as when he gives: we have reason to thank him for *all*, but *most* for the *severe*.

How little does the world know of that intercourse which is carried on between heaven and earth! What petitions are daily presented, and what answers are received at a throne of grace! O the blessed privilege of prayer! O the wonderful love, care, attention, and power of the Great Shepherd! His eye is ever upon us, when our spirits are almost overwhelmed within us; he knoweth our path; his ear is always open to us; let who will overlook and disappoint us, he will not. When means and hope fail, when every thing looks dark upon us, when we seem shut up on every side, when we are brought to the lowest ebb, still our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. To him all things are possible; and before the exertion of his power, when he is pleased to arise and work, all hindrances give way, and vanish like a mist before the sun. And he can so manifest himself to the soul, and cause his goodness to pass before it, that the hour of affliction shall be the golden hour of the greatest consolation.

The Lord has given us to know his name as a resting-place and a hiding-place, a sun and shield. Circumstances and creatures may change; but he will be an unchangeable Friend. The way is rough, but he trod it before us, and is now with us in every step we take; and every step brings us nearer to our heavenly home. Our inheritance is surely reserved for us, and we shall be kept for it by his power through faith. Our present strength is small, and without a fresh supply would be quickly exhausted; but he has engaged to renew it from day to day; and he will soon appear to wipe all tears from our eyes; and then shall we appear with him in glory.*

An evil heart and an evil temper will work us trouble, but the Lord has provided a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care; the fruit of all is to take away sin, and the end of all will be eternal life in glory. Think of these words, put them into the balance of the sanctuary; and then throw all your trials into the opposite scale, and you will find there is no proportion between them. Say then, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, for when he has fully tried me I shall come forth as gold."†

We call that a cross which opposes our will. This opposition renders it painful and grievous. A very little matter, the least thing becomes a great cross when our will is set much against it. How then can the believer rejoice with a heavy cross upon his back? Or how can he rejoice all his days, if he must carry it to his grave? The blessed gospel discovers how

* Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 174.

† Newton, p. 145.

this may be, and the blessed Spirit gives the experience of it; for he continues to teach the doctrines of grace, and under the cross he enforces them. The doctrines are put to the trial, and it appears that they are of God, for none could produce the effects which follow upon believing them, but an Almighty arm. Faith is tried in the fire, and the believer is convinced that it is the faith of God's elect; for the promise is made good, "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." His love to his reconciled God is put into the fiery furnace, and it comes out like the three children; sensible their God had been with them in the furnace, and their God had brought them out; for which marvellous instance of his love to them, their love was increased to him.

This is God's way; he gives grace, and then tries it. When he has enabled the sinner, by believing, to find peace and love, then he would improve those graces by daily exercise; and if the exercise of them be very sharp and afflicting, it is only to establish the trust of his heart, and to confirm the affection of his soul more perfectly in his God. *His God*, mind that, his God still. The cross is not sent to weaken that relation. He is the same tender Father to his children when he puts it upon them, as when he takes it off; and he would have them by faith to experience it.

His love changeth not. The happy objects of it have given this glorious testimony, even when under his cross. *We know that all things work together for good.* They found it so. Whatever he sent to them came with a message of his love. "Hear ye the rod, and him that appointed it." They hear what he says

by it; for he speaks of the Father's love, and the belief of this quiets their minds under the stroke of his rod. Thus it answers his purpose. This cometh not forth of the dust, but is appointed for me; my Father hath sent it, not in anger for the punishment of my sins, but in the tenderness of his affection. I know it is well ordered; I kiss the rod, and bless him that sent it.

"Have ye forgotten the exhortation," says the apostle, "in which your Father speaketh unto you as unto children? My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord," &c. What a blessed exhortation! How full of love—the love of God the Father—love to his child, who wants correction—love that would not touch him with the rod till he had most tenderly informed him of his gracious purpose. My son, my beloved, this chastening is from thy Father. It was determined for thee by covenant love, and settled upon thee for thy assertion in the great charter of heaven. All thy crosses were then mercifully appointed, their weight and measure, how long, how great, how many. What strength was needful to bear them, what comforts under them, and what holy fruits should be produced by them. All was fixed by love, is now given in love, and is to bring thee to greater enjoyment of my love.

My dear child, despise not these my chastenings, nor faint when I rebuke thee; be assured it is for thy good; there is a *needs be*. It is so necessary that I cannot love thee without chastening thee, nor receive thee among mine adopted without scourging thee.

Oh my soul! keep this in mind, remember whose cross thou art carrying; thy Father contrived it; he

sent it, and continues it, that it may work under him for the best. It is the chastening of his richest love.

Then expect it from his love, have patience under his stroke, and after it the peaceable fruits of righteousness. These will grow abundantly upon the cross; they grow no where else so rich and ripe. Survey the promises which he has made to his suffering children, and wait in faith for a joyful harvest. In due season thou shalt reap, if thou faint not.

It is hard to believe this under the cross ; to cleave, to cleave to him in love, as our Father, when his hand is lifted up to smite ; yea, when we smart under his rod, then to see love in his heart, and love guiding his hand, is faith very triumphant. We are apt to look upon our sufferings as coming from the wrath of God. We think he must be displeased, or else he would not delight to put us to pain ; upon this account we are not reconciled to the cross, but would shake it off if we could. The scripture gives us a different view of this matter, and represents God in a more amiable light, even in the severest chastisements of his children. He is their Father, and they are his sons.

He has always the same Father's love, and is always dealing with them as sons. His cross is one of the chief marks of it. He sends it with a message of love, and it comes to them big with mercies. When the Father intends an abundant communication of his love, he generally makes way for it by some heavy cross ; and when he would continue or increase his favours, he keeps the cross upon them.

He would teach them more submission to his will, for which he wisely and mercifully suits the cross.

He would improve their love to him, which he does by manifesting his to them. His children have found suffering times happy times ; they never had such nearness to their Father, such holy freedom with him, and such heavenly refreshments from him as under the cross. It only took away what stopped the increase of this happiness, which thereby was made more spiritual and more exalted.*

We know of nothing more powerfully calculated to produce and maintain, in the afflicted Christian's soul, that spirit of cheerful and thankful resignation, which brings at once such glory to his God and such peace to his own heart, than the fully realized and abidingly cherished conviction, that all the dealings of his Saviour God with him, however they may differ as to their external aspects, are all alike the emanations and expressions of his infinite love ! That the dispensations which that love appoints may be continually changing, like the alternations of light and shade, as his infinite wisdom may see to be most conducive, by their change, to his people's spiritual welfare, but still the love itself changeth not ; for with it is " no variableness, neither shadow of turning," but it endureth from everlasting to everlasting ; like himself, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

Oh, yes, it is indeed a blessed frame for a believer's mind, (and assuredly it ought to be his abiding frame) when he is enabled to repose on his Redeemer's love, with a confidingness which no trials can shake, and to acquiesce in his appointments with a satisfaction which no afflictions can disturb ; and then, whatever

* Romaine's "Walk of Faith," chap. ix.

that Redeemer's appointments, as to his earthly circumstances may be, whether he is pleased to prosper or to defeat his best converted plans, to realize, disappoint his most fondly cherished hopes, to give or to take away what most he desires or loves, he is able, with equal gratitude of heart, to bless "the name of the Lord!" And is it not strange, (and, oh, what a melancholy proof how imperfectly his nature is as yet renewed!) that after having once been privileged to read, with a believing heart, the records of *that* love, as contained in the scenes exhibited in Gethsemane's garden, and on Calvary's cross, he should ever feel the smallest difficulty in reposing in the Redeemer's love with *such* confidingness, and in his appointments with such resignation. It is true we are so habituated to associate with the very name of love the idea of doing all within our power to avert the sufferings, gratify the wishes, and thus promote the happiness of the beloved object, that we find it at times hard to believe; yea, it is confessedly a noble triumph of faith, with unwavering confidence to feel *assured* that when the hand of a Saviour God is stretched forth to cross all our favourite plans—even those that were arranged most faithfully, as we fancied, for the advancement of his glory, and to blight all our dearest hopes—even those which we cherished in the sweetest spirit of submission to his will—it is love, the very tenderest, fondest love, which directs its every movement.

And yet, did we but reason and feel, as, if Christians in more than name we ought to do, we should find it much harder to believe that any thing but such love *could* direct a single movement of the Saviour's hand, in any of his appointments, however

afflictive, on behalf of his own beloved people ; of those so inconceivably dear to him, that he did not deem even the sacrifice of his own life, the pouring out of his own blood amidst all the ignominy and agony of the death of the cross, too costly a price at which to purchase their eternal happiness—too vast a sacrifice by which to testify the boundlessness of his love. We do not deny that the dispensations which he appoints may often, to our short-sighted faculties, appear very mysterious ; that his footsteps are often in the sea, and his paths in the deep waters, where his designs cannot be traced : but, oh ! might we not expect that the same confidingness which is reposed in well-tried earthly affection, should be reposed in *his* ; that *its* tenderness might be trusted, even when its plans could not be traced, and that any suspicious doubts which the apparent severity of *his* dealings might awaken, would be at once put to flight by the remembrance of what passed in the garden of Gethsemane, and all painful perplexity changed into cheerful acquiescence, by his own assurance to Peter, “ What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” Yes ! I cannot but feel persuaded that if believers were more in the habit of devoutly dwelling on the contemplation of the infinite love and infinite wisdom of their Saviour God, they would be able to exhibit under the pressure of heavy trials, a spirit more suitable to the exalted privileges which they possess, and more calculated to honour him in the eyes of the children of the world !

The language, not merely of their lips, but of their heart and life, amidst the most painful and perplexing dispensations, by which he might see fit to try

their faith and patience, would in spirit be habitually this—When I look at the cross and remember who it is that is there offering up himself amidst the lingering tortures of its agonizing death, as a sacrifice for *my* sins, and to secure my salvation, I dare not doubt his love. I feel it would be the basest ingratitude to wound it by one dishonouring doubt, written, as it is, in his tears, and agonies and blood. Oh! then, what a heart must mine be, if I can refuse to trust in it with the most unsuspecting confidingness. Aye, though it should appoint for me trials, beyond all which ever yet were appointed for any child of man! True, this is a most perplexing dispensation: I cannot fathom fully its deep design: it so crushes my spirit, it so wounds my heart in the very tenderest point, it so dries up the source of all my earthly happiness, and gives such a wilderness aspect to the world: but, oh! unbelieving, ungrateful heart, though thou canst not trace, art thou unwilling to trust a Saviour's love? May I not feel assured that this is precisely the trial which is best suited to my spiritual condition, since it is the one which Infinite Wisdom has chosen; and is *that* a wisdom which can by possibility be mistaken? Is the child to dictate to the parent what discipline to adopt in training him up for future usefulness? Is the patient to prescribe to the physician what remedies to employ for the accomplishment of his recovery? And shall I dictate to the only wise God, my Saviour, what course of corrective discipline he ought to adopt in training me up for my purchased inheritance of glory? Shall I prescribe to the Heavenly Physician what remedies he ought to employ to accomplish my spiritual cure? And if his discipline

be stricter, or his remedies more painful than is palatable to flesh and blood, oh ! shall I therefore question his love or quarrel with his appointments ? *

I think the believer, even while in the furnace, at the moment of experiencing that his trials are not joyous but grievous, feels so convinced that God is doing all things well, that he would not have it otherwise, had he his choice ; and such a desire has the new man to be made partaker of his holiness, to enjoy the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which these exercises produce, that he turns and kisses the rod, saying, Amen, deal with me as with a child. The poor world may have a rerieve here from suffering, but the child of God may not, would not if he might. Happy confidence, he will not lay on us one unneedful stroke, for as "A father pitith," &c. Happy confidence, he will not keep back one needful stroke, for he scourgeth them whom he loves, that he may receive them, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. Is it not strange that the moment he is acting most the part of a parent is just the moment we are most apt to forget we are his children ; he tells us we forget the exhortation that speaks to us as unto sons. It is pleasant as he takes these precious relationships on himself, to take him at his word, and plead them before him ; sweet to look up and say, Abba, Father ; to leave all temporal concerns in his hands, because our heavenly Father knows we have need of them ; reminding him it is a father's part to provide for the wants of his little ones. When we come to make known our spiritual wants, to remind him it is a

* "The Family of Bethany,"—Introductory Essay, by the Rev. Hugh White, p. 24.

father's feeling to be willing to give all within his means ; and even when we sin against him, depart, backslide, return base ingratitude for love, out of this depth to whom shall we naturally look but to our parent ? As the prodigal when confessing he was not worthy to be called his child, begins his sentence with " Father ! " No, nothing can change this relationship. " Though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer : thy name is from everlasting." He will spare, as a man spares his own son that serveth him ; even though forced to speak against his dear son, his pleasant child, he earnestly remembered him still. His bowels were troubled for him ; he could not help having mercy ; and he will lead us also ; cause us to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein we shall not stumble—for he is a father to Israel ; he will put on us the best robe in his wardrobe—the righteousness of Christ ; he will give his greatest gift as a token of his love—his Holy Spirit ; he will cause us to be shod with the gospel of peace ; when tempted to doubt of his faithfulness, he points to David's feeling when crying out, O ! Absalom, my son, my son, would to God I had died in thy place ; and appeals to our hearts if David *could* have afflicted Absalom *willingly* ; he points to what his servant Moses has left on record is to be expected from that parent, (Numb. xi. 12,) that he should carry his sucking child in his bosom, and reminds us by taking that relationship upon himself, he has bound himself thus to act, and he will carry us in his bosom to the land of promise, and we shall not halt till he is wearied, nor fall till he stumbles ; none shall pluck us out of his hands, till the arm of Omnipotence fails

from weakness; no lion shall overtake, no enemy overcome, while the everlasting arms are underneath, and the banner of love above. This is your portion and mine, dear fellow pilgrim. Lord, what is man that thou shouldst magnify him, that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment.*

“What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” John xiii. 7.

God deals with his people in many different ways. Sometimes in clear manifestations of his love: sometimes he *appears* to be dealing with them in anger; but there is one glorious and consolatory truth which should ever be impressed upon our minds, viz., that however apparently God may deal with us in wrath, yet it is not so in reality—though he may correct us, yet it is not in anger, nor does it proceed from the shadow of wrath in the Divine mind. No; his is the correction of a Father; the chastisement of one whose every feeling towards us is one of love, and however dark and mysterious may be his dealings with us, let us remember that “what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.” It may be difficult to realize this at the moment, when flesh and blood are stricken to the ground under the chastening hand of God—yes, it is difficult at such a time to realize the blessed comforting truth, that God is dealing with us in love, but if we cannot always feel assured of it now, the time is coming when we shall be convinced of it, and when we shall acknowledge that it has been by a *right way* that the Lord has led us all our journey through.

* Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

But we are not always left to this "hereafter" to have the history of God's dealings with us cleared up. I am sure that I speak the sentiments of many a child of God when I say, that even under the severest pressure of affliction, even in the intensest human sorrow, he has been able to realize a Father's hand correcting him in *mercy*; and to believe that his dealings have been dictated by the most tender and compassionate *love*.*

* Rev. D. K. Drummond.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.

Isaiah lxiii. 8. Heb. ii. 17, 18; iii. 15.

IT is a comfortable consideration, that he with whom we have to do, our great High Priest, who once put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and now for ever appears in the presence of God for us, is not only possessed of sovereign power and authority, but wears our very nature, and feels and exercises in the highest degree those tendernesses and commiserations which I conceive are essential to humanity in its perfect state. The whole history of this wonderful life is full of inimitable instances of this kind. His bowels were moved before his arm was exerted, he condescended to mingle tears with mourners, and wept over distresses which he was not able to relieve. He is still the same in his exalted state; compassions dwell within his heart. In a way inconceivable to us, but consistent with his supreme dignity and perfection of happiness and glory, he still feels for his people. When Saul persecuted the members upon

earth, the head complained from heaven ; and sooner shall the most tender mother sit inattentive to the cries and wants of her infant, than the Lord Jesus be an unconcerned spectator of his suffering children. No, with the ear and heart of a friend, he attends to their sorrows ; he counts their sighs, puts their tears in his bottle, and when our spirits are overwhelmed within us, he knows our path, and adjusts the time and measure of our trials, and every thing that is necessary for our present support and seasonable deliverance, with the same unerring wisdom and accuracy as he weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, and meted out the heavens with a span.

Still more, besides his benevolent he has an *experimental sympathy*. He knows our sorrows not merely as he knows all things, but as one who has been in our situation, and who, though without sin himself, endured when upon earth inexpressibly more for us than he will ever lay upon us. He has sanctified poverty, pain, disgrace, temptation, and death, by passing through these states, and in whatever state his people are, they may by faith have fellowship with him in their sufferings, and he will by sympathy and love, have fellowship and interest with them in theirs. What then shall we fear, or of what shall we complain, when all our concerns are written upon his heart, and their management, to the very hairs of our head, are under his care and providence ; when he pities us more than we can do ourselves, and has engaged his Almighty power to sustain and relieve us ? However, as he is tender he is wise also ; he loves us, but especially with regard to our best interests. If there were not something in our hearts and our situation that required discipline

and medicine, he so delights in our prosperity that we should never be in heaviness. The innumerable comforts and mercies with which he enriches even our darkest days are sufficient proofs that he does not willingly grieve us, but when he sees a need be for chastisement, he will not withhold it, because he loves us; on the contrary, that is the very reason why he afflicts. He will put his silver into the fire to purify it, but he sits by as the refiner, to direct the process and to secure the end he has in view, that we may neither suffer too much nor in vain.*

The human spirit, when pressed down with sorrow, longs for sympathy, and the sympathy which it seeks is that of being possessed of kindred feelings with its own. Even from amongst men what sufferer will select for his friend and comforter in adversity one who has enjoyed a life of uninterrupted prosperity, and who has never tasted the bitterness of sorrow? He seeks to another stricken spirit for sympathy. Let an angel descend from the upper sanctuary to visit the mourner—kind and benevolent as may be his words—he is felt to be an angel still; and the mourner yearns for a human heart to which he may confide his sorrows—a heart filled with the homely feelings of humanity, and feelings tried as his own have been.

Jesus, the Son of God, became man, and took “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,” that *he* might have a fellow-feeling with our infirmities, and that we might have the strong consolation of his sympathy in the hour of trial. It is true that in his

* Newton's Cardiphonia, p. 21.

divine nature he was omniscient; and that all our wants were known to him before he descended into an estate of humiliation; his experience has added nothing to his infinite knowledge; but, oh! it has served to endear him to his suffering people, and to adapt his character to their need. We cannot venture to make his human experience the subject of our speculation; but we are assured of the fact, that to his Godhead humanity was united; and we are taught in scripture to regard the feelings of his human nature as uniting him to us in the bond of brotherhood, and as an additional motive to confide in his love. For thus saith the apostle: "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are;" "*let us therefore come unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*"

The benefit of his sufferings, as affording an assurance of his sympathy, will be further apparent, if we now meditate on the same Divine person, not only as a suffering but also as an exalted Redeemer, and consider the sorrows which he suffered on earth, as having conduced to the perfection of his character, and the efficacy of his work, as our High Priest in heaven. In the one clause, the Redeemer is described as a "Man of sorrows," who was "tried in all points like as we are;" in the other, as a "great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens." His exaltation to glory is a grand and consoling truth to his people, and it is here presented as the rock of their confidence and hope. *We have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, a Priest, a High Priest, a great High*

Priest, that has passed into the heavens,—what shall we add more?—Jesus, the Son of God! The glory of his divine person, and the dignity of his exalted state, may well cheer us in the darkest hour; but the brightness of his glory and the height of his exaltation are enhanced and endeared to his suffering people, by the touching recollection that he too was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is the same divine person that has passed into the heavens, and there taken his place at the right hand of God, far above all principality and power, who once trode the same vale of tears which we now tread, and shared our feelings as well as our fortunes on earth; who stood by the bier of the widow's son, and who groaned in spirit and was troubled, and wept at the grave of Lazarus, and who spoke soothingly to his weeping sisters; who, in his own person, felt what it was to live a suffering life, and to die a painful death; and in the pangs of hunger and thirst, in the privations of poverty, in the perils of persecution, and in the deep agony of the garden and the cross, tasted every variety of human sorrow, and sounded the lowest depths of human nature. The same divine person, who then suffered and wept, *has passed into the heavens*; but think not that he has left his human sympathies behind him. There, as here, he is our High Priest, a great High Priest, and highly exalted, yet not the less a "merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God," a High Priest, who is indeed "the brightness of his Father's glory," yet made like unto his brethren, that, having himself suffered, being tempted, "he might be able to succour them that are tempted." He is *our* High Priest still, amidst the glories of the upper sanctuary:

the same gracious work, the same suffering people engage his thoughts as when he sojourned on earth ; here he offered a sacrifice for sin which he there presents at the throne, and he is exalted for the very purpose of carrying into effect, and bringing to its completion, that work of redeeming mercy which brought him down from heaven.

Oh, how cheering to know that Christ is now the same in heaven as he was when upon earth ; that the glory of heaven has not changed him ; that when he died he did not throw aside our nature, but resumed it at his resurrection, and still retains it in personal union with the divine ; that, amidst the joys of heaven, he has not forgotten any one of his little flock for whom he suffered in the garden and on the cross ; that he who was “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh” is now made “head over all things,” yet, that he still regards us with a brother’s eye ; that having borne our griefs, he still sympathizes with our sorrows.” A great High Priest, passed into the heavens, yet touched with a feeling of our infirmities ! While awed by the majesty of his Godhead, how cheering to think of the tenderness of his humanity ; and when almost afraid to lift up our eyes to the place where his honour dwelleth, how affecting the thought that there is a *human heart on the throne.**

Jesus, wearied with his journey. John iv. 6.

My soul ! art thou wearied with the labours of the day, and glad that the evening of rest is come ? Look unto thy Lord ! Behold Jesus wearied with *his* journey ; as part of the curse, this, among other con-

* Buchanan’s “Comfort in Affliction,” p. 103.

sequences, seized upon the Lord of life and glory, from the moment he became flesh : " In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." All the sinless frailties and infirmities of our poor nature ; all the calamities to which human life is exposed, in the thorns and thistles which the earth is made to bring forth to man, and the dust of death, into which (as Jesus spake by the spirit of propheey) he knew that Jehovah would bring him. Psa. xxii. 15. These were the very conditions to which the Redeemer subjected himself, in the days of his flesh, when "*he was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;*" and hence his whole life was a life of weariness, sorrows and affliction.

And he not only felt in himself the common wants, and was exposed to the common miseries of nature; but living, as in an hospital of woe, amidst the sick and wounded, he participated in every groan he heard, and, as the prophet spake of him, "Himself bare our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows." And what can bring relief to the pilgrimage tears of the redeemed, or so sweetly soothe the wearied frames of his people, both in mind and body, as looking unto Jesus? Precious Lord! do I see thee wearied with thy journey; and shall I repine at mine? Hadst thou not where to lay thine head; and shall I feel hurt if the world refuse me a lodging? Was the Son of God, though rich, yet condescending to be poor; and though the Lord of life and glory, yet a "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief; subjecting himself to hunger, thirst and weariness, a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and the outcast of the people?" O Lord, how sweetly accommodating is

thy blessed example to all the tried and trying circumstances of life! Grant me, dear Lord, as oft as sorrow, weariness, disappointment, and any of the afflicting dispensations incident to human life come upon me, grant me to be looking unto thee: and I would say, *Jesus was wearied with his journey!**

Oh, who would grudge the depth of suffering, who would flinch from the furnace heated sevenfold, if he can have his Saviour with him, afflicted in all his afflictions, feeling with him, suffering with him, supporting and soothing him! Oh, who would not cheerfully plunge amid the deep waters, if it make our beloved Master more precious to our own souls; make us feel him more needful to our spiritual life, and clothe him with more loveliness and beauty than ever! Ah, shall we not one day, in that blessed land where there is no more night of sorrow, look back with hearts overflowing with gratitude, to those seasons of affliction and trial. We shall then see that the choicest mercy, the most abundant love, were conveyed to our souls on the wings of the tempest and the storm; dismal, dark, and dreary perhaps the means by which they were brought, but these were the messengers of peace and joy to our souls.†

Look at each sweet character and grace of Jesus, and mark how suited they all are for his people, when buffeted by Satan, or fatigued in the world, or tried with the many burdens and interruptions to their peace, which arise from bodily infirmities. Look at each, and see what a bosom Jesus opens, to receive

* Hawker's "Evening Portion."
† Rev. D. T. K. Drummond.

and lull to sleep in his arms every lamb of his fold. If the tempter should hiss from the "lion's den and from the mountain of the leopards," how quieting is that voice which speaketh pardon and peace in the blood of the cross! And what strength does faith afford in Jesus's righteousness, "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked!" If the world frown, if family cares and sorrows arise, or if any of those various afflictions which necessarily arise out of a fallen state, abound to make this state wearisome, still the promise holds good, "He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds." Jesus will here lull them to sleep with his sweet refreshment. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." And if, my soul, thine own manifold frailties, which daily and hourly harass thee, from that body of sin and death thou carriest about with thee; if these induce sorrow, as well they may, oh! how blessed is it to look up to Jesus under all, and view that blood which speaketh *for* thee, more than all thy sins plead *against* thee! Here, thou dearest Lord, wilt thou cause me to find constant support and consolation in thee: and amidst all I shall hear thy lovely voice, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Lie down then, my soul, this night, and every night, until thou takest thy last night in the quiet bosom of the grave, upon the covenant promises of thy God, in the sure and safe resting-place of thy Jesus and his finished salvation. And as the waters of the flood allowed no resting-place for the dove, neither could she find place for the sole of her foot, until she returned to Noah in the ark; so neither will the tribulated waters of sin, and sorrow, and temptation, suffer

thee to enjoy rest in any thing short of Jesus, which the ark of Noah signified. "Return, then, to thy rest, O my soul," return to thy Jesus, thy Noah, thine ark, "for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."*

Sweet thought! In Jesus, and the relationship which he hath condescended to place himself in, all his poor followers may find a supply to fill up every vacancy. My soul, contemplate Jesus in this blessed feature of character. What relation do we need? The fatherless are commanded to look to him whose name is the everlasting Father. The motherless also, for he hath said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee." Doth death make a breach between the husband and the wife? Then the scripture saith, "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name." Are we friendless? Jesus is "the friend that sticketh closer than a brother." In short, there is no situation among the affinities of life, the kinder charities of nature, but what Jesus fills and infinitely transcends all. Pause, my soul, over this view of Jesus, and behold how he graciously proposeth to supply all wants, and to fill all vacancies. Jesus is both the Father, the Friend, the Brother, the Husband, the whole in one of all relationship and of all connexions. And amidst all the changes, the fluctuating circumstances of human affairs, the frailties and infirmities of our own hearts, and the hearts of others, which sometimes separate chief friends, what a blessed thought it is, "Nothing can separate from the love of Christ!" †

* Hawker's "Evening Portion."

† Ibid.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PROMISED GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST AS A
COMFORTER.

John xiv. 16—26. John xvi. 7.

THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS COMFORTER.

John xvi. 14. He shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Whatever may be the source of the believer's sorrow, the Holy Spirit comforts him, by bringing to his remembrance what Christ has said, or suffered, or done for him, or is now doing or will hereafter do. Christ, in some of his glorious and gracious offices, as revealed in his holy word, and applied with appropriating power by the Holy Spirit, is still the sum and substance of the afflicted believer's comfort. He is still, as he has ever been, "the consolation of Israel."

Does his sorrow spring from a spiritual source? Is he mourning over the remembrance of his manifold transgressions, by thought, word, or deed, against the law of the God he loves? The Spirit comforts him, by reminding him that God so loved him as to

give his own Son as a propitiation for his sins ; that in the Lord Jesus Christ there is “ plenteous redemption, even the forgiveness of sins ; ” that all his transgressions are blotted out in that blood, which at once absolveth and cleanseth from all sin ; and that “ there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus ; ” but that “ being justified by faith, they have peace with God,” because he hath made peace for his people by the blood of his cross, and, clothed in his righteousness, they appear infinitely lovely even in the eyes of a holy God.

Is the Christian sorrowing, because of the remainder of corruption in his heart, with which he has continually to strive ; and mourning over the want of that warm love to his Saviour-God, and that cordial delight in communion with him, and that entire conformity to his image, and that untiring devotedness to his service, after which he is perpetually panting and pursuing—but, alas ! so often baffled and defeated in the attempt ? The Spirit comforts him, by reminding him that he stands before God, complete in the imputed righteousness of his divine Redeemer ; and that, in his spiritual conflict, he is fighting under the banner of a Captain, who leads forth all his faithful soldiers to certain victory ; and that in every step of his arduous warfare, this Almighty Captain will watch over him, and shield his head in every day of battle, and crown him, in the day of his appearing, with a crown of conquest, a crown of righteousness. He will further comfort the fainting Christian, by reminding him, that God his Saviour bestows on all his people the gift of the Holy Ghost to dwell in them, and abide with them for ever, by whose divine power they shall be enabled to

triumph over all their spiritual enemies ; shall be at last perfectly purified from all the defilements of sin, renewed in the divine image, in righteousness and true holiness, and thus sealed with the Spirit's seal unto the day of redemption, when, seeing a Saviour God as he is, they shall be like him, pure as he is pure, holy as he is holy.

Is the Christian pilgrim, on his way to Zion, bowed down with the burden of grief, from the pressure of earthly sorrow, in some of those manifold shapes which it wears in this world of woe ? The Spirit comes as his comforter, to visit him in his hour of sorrow, and whisper peace and consolation to his troubled soul, by reminding him, his beloved Master and Saviour was himself a man of sorrows, and can therefore sympathize with his people in all their sorrows, and can be touched with a feeling of all their infirmities ; that every trial is appointed for them by Him, in the very faithfulness and tenderness of his love ; that He is not *experimentalizing* with them, for his wisdom is infinite ; that the way by which he is leading them to the city of habitation may be a *rough*, but must be the *right* way, because it is *his* way ; that these afflictions are all the messengers of his mercy, sent to them on the most gracious errands, to wean them from the world, draw them closer to himself, make them more meet for their heavenly inheritance, and give them the most precious opportunity of glorifying his holy name ; and that the day is quickly coming, when all these afflictions, sanctified by the Holy Spirit to their souls, shall be found to his praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus it is that in comforting the Christian, the

Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. He shews to the mourning child of God, such a stamp of a Saviour's love on all his afflictions, as more than reconciles him to them all. He infuses into Christ's promises such power, and into his sympathy such sweetness, as enable the heavy laden soul to look up to heaven rejoicingly, and smile amidst its tears. He makes the word and the ordinances of God channels for conveying into the mourner's heart the most abundant consolations, and gives him often in prayer, and at the sacramental table, such plentiful refreshing from the presence of the Lord, as constrains the child of sorrow, in the retirement of his chamber, or the communion of saints, at the table of the Lord, to cry out, "this is no other than the gate of heaven."

Oh! what a comforter is God the Holy Ghost! Who would not welcome the trials, however bitter, however protracted, which call forth his love and omnipotence into their most gracious exercise; and enable the believer to experience a blessedness, flowing from his comforts, which would be cheaply purchased, were such a price required, with all the sorrows that have ever been endured on earth. Better, immeasurably better, to be overwhelmed with afflictions, more accumulated, and aggravated, if possible, than even Job's, if supported and solaced under them by this Divine Comforter of the church of Christ, than to be a stranger to his consolations, though enriched with earthly happiness, unalloyed by a tinge of earthly sorrow, beyond what was ever vouchsafed to mortal man.*

* Sermon by Rev. Hugh White.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John xiv. 26.

Oh blessed Spirit, to whom I owe such unspeakable mercies, let me, Lord, contemplate thee this day under this gracious, kind, compassionate office of the Comforter. Thou art indeed the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. And how mercifully dost thou sympathize with all the followers of Jesus in their various afflictions, both of soul and body. How tenderly dost thou shew us our sins, and lead to Jesus' blood to wash them away. How sweetly dost thou visit, encourage, strengthen, instruct, lead, and guide into all truth. And how powerfully at times by thy restraining grace dost thou enable us to mortify the deeds of the body, that we may live. Hail, thou holy, blessed, Almighty Comforter ! O let thy visits be continual. Come, Lord, and abide with me, and be with me for ever. Manifest that thou art the sent of the Father, and of the Son, in coming to me in Jesus' name, in teaching me of all the precious things concerning Jesus, and acting as the remembrancer of Jesus ; that in thee, and by thy blessed office-work, I may know and live in the sweet enjoyment of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the influence of the Holy Ghost.*

The Christian in the wilderness.—Hosea ii. 14, 15.

We have now followed the Christian into the wilderness. Consider in the next place the *comfort the Lord imparts to him there.*

* Hawker.

He says of Israel, "I will speak comfortably unto her." But this is not the exact rendering of the words; we must go for that to the margin of our Bibles. We read there, "I will speak to her heart." And how exquisitely natural as well as touching is this language! None but a man of affliction, or a God who knows what is in man in affliction, would have thought of it. Others speak comfortably to us in sorrow, but if that sorrow is deep, what power have their words? In most cases they have none.

Nay, what have our Bibles themselves sometimes been? As powerless as our neighbours. "What a comfort must this blessed book prove now to that poor sufferer," says a Christian friend, as his own quiet soul is drawing consolation out of it; but the fact is, the book lies beside that man for hours unopened, and when it is taken up, he wonders where its power and sweetness are gone. And how long does all this last? Just long enough to shew us that there is no comforter but God; just long enough to make us feel our own utter helplessness, and the poverty and nothingness of every thing around us. It lasts till we are forced to lift up a wretched, half-despairing cry to heaven for consolation; and then what follows? O brethren, that every one of you could tell! The power to tell would be cheaply purchased by a few sighs and tears; yes, by some of you at a price that you would tremble to pay. God now speaks. He spake indeed before by the friends he sent to us, and by his word, but then it was to the ear; at the best, to the understanding; he speaks now to the heart. And could the wondering mourner have shewn you what his words have done there, you would say of such a mourner, and say it of him while

in the wilderness, in the very depth of his tribulation, “O that my soul were in his soul’s stead!” The great comforter of the church has vindicated his honour; he has taught the soul whence its consolations must come if they come at all; and now they are poured into it with the tenderness of a father and the omnipotence of a God. Now every thing comforts it, for God speaks by every thing. A word affects it. And as for the Bible, no tongue can tell the eagerness with which its promises are embraced, or the solace they impart. So powerful is it become, that perhaps one declaration in it is the stay of the soul for days or weeks. The man says, “were that one text the whole of my Bible, did I find nothing more in it to comfort me than I find there, it would be enough: I could not be wretched.

Among all the people of God in this suffering world, there is not one who would not prefer the dreariest desert with Christ by his side, and the consolations of Christ in his heart, to the brightest and most joyous of all earthly scenes without him.*

* Bradley’s Sermons.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PROSPECT OF FUTURE GLORY.

2 Cor. iv. 17. Rev. vii. 16, 17; xxii. 1—5.

THE frequent believing views of glory are the most precious cordials in all afflictions. These cordials, by cheering our spirits, render our sufferings far more easy, enable us to bear them with patience and joy, and so strengthen our resolutions that we forsake not Christ for fear of trouble. If the way be ever so rough, can it be tedious if it lead to heaven? O sweet sickness, reproaches, imprisonments, or death accompanied with these tastes of our future rest! This keeps the sufferings from the soul, so that it can only touch the flesh. I may say, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” Unless this promised rest had been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in

the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have these supporting joys. When persecution and fear hath shut the door, Christ can come in and stand in the midst and say to his disciples, "Peace be unto you." Paul and Silas can be in heaven, even when they are "thrust into the inner prison, their bodies scourged with many stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks."

Could we but clearly see heaven, as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of his dealings could be grievous.*

It is a comfort to the saints that in this world they have the worst place they shall ever have; things grow better with us every day as every day brings us nearer to our Father's house. A traveller has but little concern that his money is all spent when he has got within sight of home. What though there be no candles in the house, when we are sure break of day is near! The believer is looking for the mercy of Christ unto life; and there is much mercy amidst all the trials which he meets with in his way to it. Every cross is sweetened with some mercy.

Be frequent in thoughts of heaven, your rest, your home—where all your sorrows shall have a full end. "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." Every one of your sorrows takes off one from

* Baxter's "Saints' Rest."

the account; we are one step the nearer to glory; the same trial is not to come over again; and blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours. Rev. xv. 13. Christian! you shall rest from your labours soon; there is a heaven above, and the hope of it comforts and delights you here; it is well, and must be so—heaven will make you amends for every thing.*

To be sorrowful is the birth-right of man; but to be able to rejoice amidst suffering is a privilege peculiar to the believer, and the ground of this joy is Christian hope,—rejoicing in hope. Rom. xii. 12. Though this is not the climate for fair and promising hopes, but rather for blighting, chilling and withering fears; yet that hope may not be supposed to have taken its flight from this unfriendly region, there are certain circumstances under which it not only flourishes, but defies the inroads of time, the decay of age, and all other attacks which threaten destruction. In deep affliction, and in the near prospect of death, the Christian's hope, like the flower which blooms at midnight, appears in all its beauty and vitality, and casts its fragrance around the dying pillow. When the things of time are vanishing, and passing away like shadows, and the ocean of eternity presents itself, this hope is realized as *substantial*; it is then especially found an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.†

Though “man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly

* Hill's “It is well.”

† Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 289.

upward," yet none of them spring out of the ground. They are all, to God's own people, under the direction of infinite wisdom and love. If we are in heaviness, there is a needs be for it, whether we know it or not; for he who so loved us as to die upon the cross to free us from the curse of the law, will not inflict any unnecessary pain on those whom he has taught to put their trust in him. Some of our afflictions are medicinal, to check that worst of maladies, indwelling sin—or to prevent a relapse; and though at present they are not joyous, but grievous, we know not how much worse it might have been. If you had always remained as you were when I first knew you, or I as I was three or four years ago, Satan might have lulled us asleep upon the enchanted ground! But the Lord in mercy sent something to rouse us. Our path has been rough; but I trust it will be safe, and we shall one day say, Happy affliction, which brought me nearer to my God, or prevented my wandering from him.

Again, sometimes the Lord honours his people, by appointing them a great trial. As he has given them to believe in his name, so also he enables them to support affliction with cheerful submission, patience and hope; so far the post of trial is a post of honour. Thereby the power and reality of religion, the power and faithfulness of our God, in supporting and relieving, is exhibited to his glory, for the encouragement of believers and the conviction of gainsayers; and we ourselves are taught more and more of the vanity of creature dependence, and the all-sufficiency of our great and unchangeable Friend, who has promised that *if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him.*

Let us cheer up ! the time is short, and shortening apace. Every pulse we feel beats a sharp moment of the pain away ; and the last stroke will come ! Then heaven will make amends for all.*

MY DEAR —,

I am glad to hear you are in our neighbourhood, though grieved for the cause, but why ?

'Trials make the promise sweet ;
Trials give new life to prayer ;
Trials bring me to his feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.'

Then let us enjoy our wilderness blessings ; here, ruffled peace. Future joy, and joy yet future, we shall have *eternity* for. Only for a few moments joy in sorrow ; calm in a storm. Then I will rather wish you joy, that by the pressure of his dear hand, he thus keeps you in mind, "Behold ! how I love you." How needed it must be, when compassion wounds, when love chastens. The Lord "has need" now not of your strength, but of your weakness. What a day is before us ! when we shall be able to adore his faithfulness, without the teaching of it by a crossed will and disappointed prospects ; when we shall be able to know the sweetness of confidence, without trust ; humility, without pride to humble ; the fulness of his presence, without a waste heart ; the sympathy of our Comforter, without sorrow ; the gentleness of our Physician, without pain ; the tenderness of our Nurse, without sickness : yes, and even the abounding of grace without sin.†

* Mrs. Hawkes' Memoirs, p. 240.—Extract from Newton.
† Lady Powerscourt's Letters.

Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, &c. John xiv. 1, 2.

Here is the strength of your warfare—faith. Here is the sword, in the strength and power of which you are to go to the conflict. Observe, in this opening passage, how beautifully and tenderly our Lord addresses himself to allay the fears and troubles of his disciples. He holds out to them two things—the ground of their confidence, and the joyful hope set before them: first, the ground of their confidence, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Now this does not imply that the disciples did not already believe, it is simply an exhortation and encouragement to them to “increase” their faith. In the same manner, when addressing Christians, in the midst of trouble and distress, we call upon them to *believe*, to confide in God; not that they do not already believe, but because they need especial increase and abundance of faith to support and cheer them in the midst of trial and distress. This brings out the important part, *believe also in me*. It is not in God as an abstract being, but in God as manifested in the man Christ Jesus; here is the stay and confidence of sinners; here is the only sure foundation upon which the Christian can rest, and the only ground of solid, blessed comfort.

But observe, Christ does not only lay down a ground of confidence; he brings us also to a joyful *hope*, a blessed, glorious, and precious hope! “In my Father's house are many mansions.” Here we learn the mixture of faith and hope which is necessary to the confidence of a true Christian. Only believe! Hope unto the end! says the Saviour, “Ye

believe in God, believe also in me." O blessed Physician! thy balm heals every wound, and relieves us from those fears and sorrows which sin has caused.

"In my Father's house are many mansions." There is a particular force in the original here; the word translated "mansions," signifies 'quiet and continual resting places.' How this opens up to us the full force and beauty of the passage! Now, remember, dear friends, that this hope was not set before the apostles only; it is set before you, and whilst your Saviour calls on you to believe in him, to the saving of your souls, he also, in the words of blessed and gracious encouragement, says to you, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

Can we any longer be troubled and dismayed? When our beloved Master, in the very face and prospect of all his sufferings, holds out to us such blessed and glorious prospects, can we suffer ourselves to be cast down and disquieted under present trials?

Do I address any here who are in trouble and anguish of soul, on account of sin; who have felt the power of an awakened conscience;—who know what it is to wrestle with the strong man armed;—and yet who feel that they have grieved the spirit of God;—who are led to cry, "Oh that I were as in months past;"—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" O dear friends, I beseech you, as you have found Jesus faithful in times past, trust him for the time to come! Be not cast down, if even in the exercise of faith and hope, the dark cloud is not at once withdrawn, and the brightness of the sun of righteousness shine into your hearts. Take the least of your Father's blessings as a sure token that he will completely fulfil all his promises. Bless God for what-

ever consolation he affords, and press forward, remembering the greatness of the hope set before you, and be assured that at length all shall terminate in perfect holiness, and joy, and peace.

Are there any here who are cast down and afflicted in body or mind—who are suffering from bodily sickness and infirmity, or from outward trials and sore bereavements? O take the blessed comfort of this passage to yourself, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” Are any of you looking with pain and anguish of heart, upon those from whom you feel that you are about to be separated for ever in this world? Do you feel the tide of grief setting in upon your hearts, for the snapping asunder of some tender and endearing tie of earthly relationship? O my friends, here is the remedy! here is the blessed word of peace which will wipe away the tear, and transform it into a smile,—“In my Father’s house are many mansions.” Weep not for those who are separated from you by death, they have only gone before to take their place in those mansions which their Saviour has prepared for them. They are safe and happy there, and they beckon you to follow after them, and to take your place in those happy seats. Turn then your grief into a source of blessed peace and joy. The more your hearts are wrung with agony at the prospect of parting from them in this world, the more should you exercise this blessed, glorious hope of meeting them in the next.

Remember also that we have even a brighter hope than the disciples had. Our Saviour said to them, “I go to prepare a place for you.” He had not then really gone, but now he is *gone*; gone to prepare a place for *us*, my friends, for *you*, and for

me, for all the children of God ; for if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Think then what our elder brother is doing for us in heaven; think that he is now at the right hand of God, preparing for us mansions of eternal rest and blessedness. Can we then indulge in grief and sorrow, when we remember that that hand which was nailed to the cross for us is now preparing for us a mansion of rest in heaven. O let us look through the mists, and damp chilling fogs of this world ; let us look to the sunshine of eternity. Let us also look to the concluding part of this gracious promise, “ if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” There is the pole-star of the Christian. Where Christ is, there the Christian hopes to be. No matter where. Where Jesus is, there the Christian hopes to be found. Where he shall never more be separated from his beloved Lord, but redeemed and ransomed by his own precious blood, he is Christ’s, and Christ is his for ever and ever ! My dear friends, if it should please God to send us blow after blow, trial upon trial in this world, surely we need not any more precious, more cheering, more consoling assurance than this, that “ where Christ is, there shall we be also ! ” Let me leave it upon your hearts. Take it in the name of the Lord. “ Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me ; in my Father’s house are many mansions ; I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”*

* Rev. D. Drummond.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PROSPECT OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING TO
TAKE US UNTO HIMSELF.

John xiv. 3. Thess. iv. 16—18. Rev. xxii. 20.

THE fourth practical use I would make of our subject is to observe, that a realized and habitual anticipation of the second coming of the Lord is powerfully efficacious to teach the child of God contentment amidst the most distressing, and consolation amidst the most afflictive circumstances, in which he can be placed in the course of his pilgrimage to the place of his eternal rest.*

We would now consider our subject as peculiarly calculated to supply patience and consolation amidst all the trials and afflictions which are so often the peculiar portion of the children of God. For so far are they from having any privileged exemption, in right of their covenant relationship to God, from the

* Practical Reflections on the Second Advent, by H. White, chap. viii. p. 181.

ordinary sorrows and sufferings of humanity, that, in general, (strange as it may seem to those who understand not the loving kindness of the Lord), they are visited with the chastenings of God's fatherly hand, beyond the visitation of all other men. Now, whatever be the nature of those chastening visitations, the prospect of the day of Christ's appearance affords to a child of God abundant materials for the most appropriate sustaining and reviving comfort; which it imparts principally through the medium of two delightful trains of thought suggested by the anticipation of that glorious day. First, the recollection how rapidly the day is approaching, when to every faithful follower of the Lamb, sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away, and everlasting joy and gladness rest upon their heads! Yes, mourning believer! the time of thy tribulation is but short. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand!" the day to thee of unutterable triumph, unclouded brightness, unchangeable bliss!

When that day comes (and seems not its dawn breaking on the world?) thy sorrows—those very sorrows which now so lacerate and crush thy bleeding heart, will be remembered, if at all, only as the unquiet dreams of the night, to him who awaketh in the morning to the conscious possession and enjoyment of heaven's choicest blessings! or as the storms of a tempestuous night to him who, when morning dawns, reaches the haven where he would be—the home where his heart's most precious treasures are laid up.

And does not the remembrance of those unquiet dreams serve only to enhance the sweetness of life's waking bliss? Does not the retrospect of that night of storms endear beyond expression to the wearied

mariner the tranquillity of the sheltering haven—the enjoyments of the happy home? Sweet yet faint image, sorrowful child of God, of what will be the result of thy retrospect of life's unquiet dreams and vexing storms, when thy slumbering body, wakening on the morning of the resurrection, in the likeness of thy Redeemer's, shall be re-united to thy glorified spirit, to enter on the full enjoyment of heaven's eternal rest.

The second consolatory train of thought to which I have alluded, is the anticipation of the blessed results which, in the day of Christ's second coming, his people will see to have flowed from their afflictions. Then will it appear to themselves, and all their fellow-saints, what gracious purposes these afflictions were made to subserve, in that divine system of providential arrangements, by which their heavenly Father carried on, with infinite wisdom and tenderness, his almighty work of sanctifying love. Then, child of God, will a rich harvest of glory be reaped by thy Redeemer, from that precious seed of sanctified sorrow which was so often moistened with thy tears. Then will the trial of thy faith, purified in the furnace of affliction, and "much more precious than that of gold purified in the fire, be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ !

Praise to thy God, whose strength was shewn to be perfect in thy weakness; whose grace was magnified in the visible consolations, with which he made thy heart, amidst all its sorrows, triumphantly to rejoice, and whose faithfulness and loving-kindness were so conspicuously manifested in all his dealings with thee, in affliction's dark and cloudy day.

Honour to thy fellow-saints, some of whom were

perhaps first attracted and won over to Christ, and others strengthened, and confirmed, and comforted, so as to run their Christian race with increased alacrity and speed, by what they saw in thee of cheerful patience in the season of tribulation.

Glory to thyself in the deepened traces of conformity to thy Saviour's image, in fuller measures of meetness for thy heavenly inheritance, and the abundant increase of that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," wrought out for thee, through the instrumentality of those afflictions, which will be then, indeed, felt to be unworthy to be compared with the glory in that day revealed.

Then when thou seest what was the "need be" for thy trials, and how they have all issued in such praise to thy God, honour to his saints, and glory to thyself, then wilt thou exclaim, in a transport of holy thankfulness and joy, 'Oh! now indeed I see that it was good for me that I was afflicted. Oh, faithless heart, that did so indulge in rebellion, and repining at those trials, which were sent as such a special token of my heavenly Father's love! Oh, faithful Saviour, that didst so patiently persevere in thy work of mercy, amidst all my provoking impatience and ingratitude, and wouldest not allow me to lose the glory, which it was thy gracious determination that I should reap from all my griefs. Everlasting praise to thee, Oh, thou God of my salvation! for all my afflictions. I see, I feel, and thankfully confess, not one could have been spared, not one withheld, without my having suffered an eternal loss.'

And why not now, believer, grasp, by anticipation, some portion of this weight of eternal glory? Why not now forget for a while thy sorrows, in the fore-

taste of this fulness of unending joy? Why not now attempt, though it be with faint and faltering voice, the prelude to this song of everlasting praise?

But in addition to this general view of the subject, if we examine it more minutely in detail, we shall discover that there is no species of the vast variety of afflictions to which we are exposed, for which the anticipation of the day of Christ's appearing does not supply peculiarly appropriate consolation.

Let us then proceed to a detailed proof of this declaration. Art thou, Christian reader, one who has seen some darling hope of earthly happiness, which for many years had been the cherished object of thy thoughts by day, and dreams by night,—hast thou seen that hope blighted by the withering breath of disappointment, and shrouded with the gloom of the shadow of death? And are there times with thee, when some trivial incident, some casual observation, unnoticed by any but thyself—the repetition, it may be, of some favourite passage or verse, or the return of some day or hour, or the revisiting of some scene or spot, linked with the fondest memories of the past, touches a string in thine heart, which in a moment vibrates with thrilling agony; and at the touch, thoughts and feelings of acutest anguish, which had been for a season lulled to rest, awake as if refreshed by sleep with renewed strength; and a tide of recollections rushes over thy spirit, fraught with the deepest, bitterest sorrow, which a child of God can be allowed to feel, and sweeping along with such overwhelming force, as seems, for a time, to threaten to carry away all thou art clinging to for support and consolation? Sorrowing child of God, turn, I conjure thee, from the contemplation of earth's expiring hope, to the anticipa-

tion of that which shall never die ! Remember, thou hast been called into existence by Almighty power, and redeemed at an infinite cost, and loaded with unnumbered blessings, and entrusted with precious talents, and raised to exalted privileges, and entitled to expatiate through boundless prospects of promised glory and blessedness, as "an heir of God, and joint-heir of Christ," for a nobler purpose than to spend the allotted years of thine earthly pilgrimage in brooding over any blighted hopes of earthly enjoyment.

Rise, then, from the dust, Christian mourner, shake off the spirit of heaviness, and put on thy beautiful garments of praise. "Rise, the Master calleth thee!" calleth thee to glorify him, by cheerful resignation, in the fires of affliction— calleth thee to seek thy future happiness in closer communion with himself, in more entire devotedness to his service; in going about, like him, doing good, to the utmost extent that thine influence can reach— calleth thee to look away from the clouded prospects of earth to the unclouded prospect of the day of his appearing; and to spend the short time of thy sojourning here, as in that day it will rejoice thee in the retrospect to have done.

What though the star of earthly hope, that shed its sweet soft radiance for a season o'er thy path, be set, to rise no more, shalt thou, who art privileged to walk in the light of God's countenance, even on earth, and hopest to bask in the full blaze of his glory throughout eternity—oh ! shalt thou go mourning all thy days long, because, in his loving-kindness, the God of thy salvation has sent the angel of affliction to wean thee from a world which he knew might ensnare, but could not satisfy, and thus to draw thee closer to his blessed self?

Instead then, of looking *back*, (or if so, only to call to remembrance the myriads of mercies thou hast received at his hands,) look *forward*!

" Yet a little while, and he that cometh will come." Oh, think of all the bliss—the glory that awaits thee, at his coming ! think of the price he paid to purchase them for thee ; and then say, should thy life be spent in brooding over any blighted hope?

Or does thy sorrow flow from a higher and a holier source ? Is it such as it is more suitable for a child of God to cherish ? A sorrow with which we know that " blessed are they that mourn,"—for truth itself has declared that *they shall be comforted* ?

Is thine a godly sorrow on account of sin ? Have thine eyes been opened by the Holy Spirit, to see the hideousness of sin, more especially from the diabolical expression of hatred against God which its features wear ; and above all, from having contemplated its frightful image, as reflected in the glass of the sufferings of his well-beloved Son ?

And dost thou shudder to think how long this accursed thing was the cherished inmate of thy bosom ; and how all thy solitude for years was to pamper *its* desires, and provide for *its* gratification ? And is thy soul exceeding sorrowful to find, that though no longer harboured as a welcome guest within thine heart, this visitant from hell is still no stranger there, but clings to thee with fearful tenacity, intruding its hateful presence into the inner sanctuary of thy spirit ; suslying with its unhallowed visions the secret chambers of imagery ; and by its defiling touch polluting thy purest pleasures, poisoning thy sweetest enjoyments, and mingling with and marring all the melody of thine heart, in the solitary musings of de-

vout meditation, or the sublime exercise of prayer and praise ?

Is such your sorrow, mourning child of God? Then look up, and lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh ! Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy ! The hour of your complete and everlasting deliverance is at hand. Yet a little while, and thy warfare shall be accomplished, and shall issue, the moment that death emancipates thy spirit from its conflict with corruption, in perfect and everlasting victory over sin in every shape.

And when the Captain of thy salvation shall appear, *then* shall thy triumph be indeed complete : for he will give thee, in that day of his appearing, the crown for which thou hast so long panted, and toiled, and struggled, in his strength successfully—a crown of *righteousness* ! Then shall the utmost longings, the loftiest ambition of thy soul be satisfied ; for thou shalt be presented and pronounced “ faultless, unblameable in holiness, before the presence of the holy God, with exceeding joy.”

But while you look forward to the triumphs of that day, to sustain and comfort your spirit, amidst the wearying and agonizing struggles of the arduous warfare in which you are engaged, let the prospect equally stimulate you to increased vigilance and activity, in carrying on the conflict, so that each day may witness some fresh victory over sin and Satan—some farther steps of progress towards the glorious goal of your wishes, the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus, even the attainment of a purity of heart, as unsullied by sin, as your Redeemer's ; a perfection of holiness, modelled in every feature, after the likeness of the holy God.

Or do you groan, believer, beneath the pressure of a body of infirmity and pain, on which disease has fastened its envenomed fangs, and which death seems to have marked for its destined prey? And is your spirit (which cannot but sympathize with the companion to which it is so closely united) continually weighed down by the body's weakness, or agonized by its sufferings, or excited by its restlessness, or enfeebled by its debility, so that you cannot discern even spiritual things with the clearness, or grasp them with the vigour, which you were privileged to do in healthier, and so far happier days?

Is the living soul within thee so harassed, and retarded in running its heavenward race, by the dying body to which it is linked, that thou seemest to thyself to be undergoing a species of suffering, like that endured of old by him who was condemned to drag about with him, fastened to his own body, a corpse that was mouldering to decay; so that thou art often constrained, in an agony of feeling to cry out, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

Oh! surely when you reflect how swiftly the day is approaching, when that very body which is now such a hindrance to all your heavenward movements, hanging like a dead weight on all your efforts to soar upwards, or engage with energy in the Saviour's service, that very body shall be made a glorified participator with your glorified spirit, in all the sublime exercises and enjoyments of the celestial sanctuary;—when you reflect that sooner, perhaps, than a careless world dreams of, or even his own church anticipates, He that is coming will come, and you shall know what it is, through the instrumentality of a body made like unto your Redeemer's glorious body;

As with a seraph's voice to sing,
To fly as on a cherub's wing,
Performing with unwearied hands
A present Saviour's high commands !

Oh ! surely, child of God, when *this* prospect bursts on your view, you may well be content to run with *patience* the race set before you, even though you should be obliged to drag after you, for a few short years, a body of infirmity, decay, and death, which contains the hidden seeds of *such* a body of undecaying strength, immortality, and glory.

But perhaps your appointed trial is of a different cast. You have been yourself, it may be, called out of the darkness of your natural state, into the marvellous light of gospel truth and gospel privileges; while that darkness still overshadows the family of which you are a member, and the friends whom your heart has for years most fondly loved. And now you no longer experience from them that endearing sympathy, in all your joys and sorrows, which you once enjoyed : and in those higher hopes and pleasures, whose divine attractions have been reconciled to your view, they see no form nor comeliness that they should desire them ; so that now the bond of union between you and them seems broken, and you feel that you are regarded as a stranger in your own home ; one, with whom its more than ever beloved inmates feel no congenial sympathy of taste, and hold no affectionate communion of heart, as once they delighted to do ;—yea, perhaps proceed further than this chilling estrangement of affection and confidence, proceed to angrier exhibitions of that enmity, which must ever be excited in the breasts of the unconverted, by the manifested presence and faithful testimony of “the

truth as it is in Jesus ; "—proceed, perhaps, to all the wounding and irritating expressions of undisguised displeasure and disgust, ridicule you as an enthusiast, or reproach you as a hypocrite—persecute you as a fanatic, or pity you as a fool. Oh, if such be your trial, look forward to the day of Christ's appearing, and be comforted ! Remember that in *that* day, the Son of God himself will espouse your cause openly, in the face of the assembled universe, and proclaim that he always regarded it, and will then publicly avenge it as his own. Then will the reproaches you have borne for his sake be rolled away, like the stone from the sepulchre where the Lord of glory lay ; and your character shall come forth, shining in resplendent lustre—your righteousness as clear as the noon-day ; and the purity of your motives as a lamp that burneth.

Then will your persecutors see that all their taunts and threatenings have been made, by the overruling hand of your God, only so many stepping-stones, by which you have risen higher in the scale of glory. Then will the wisdom of your choice, in having preferred the reproach of Christ to all the pleasures of sin or applause of the world, be abundantly vindicated, when the voice of him who sitteth on the throne, shall ratify the wisdom of that choice, by saying to you, " Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c.

But while the prospect of this coming day supplies you with abundant comfort on your own account, let it equally stimulate you to unwearied labours of love on behalf of those, who, by their enmity to you, prove themselves to be the enemies of Christ. Oh ! remember the loving Saviour's injunction, to bless them

that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you!"

Cease not, by earnest intercession for them and affectionate expostulation with them, in all the meekness, wisdom, and faithfulness of Christian love, and above all, by a consistent exhibition of the power of Christian principles, and the attractiveness of the Christian character, to do all that in you lieth to win them over to Christ; that, in the day of the manifestation of the Son of Man, you may see them standing beside you, at his right hand, and participating with you in that day, and through eternity, in all the triumphs, blessedness, and glory which shall be the portion of his people for ever and ever.

5. But perhaps your sorrow is of a less selfish character! It may be your rare and most blessed privilege to belong to a family all whose beloved members are members of the household of faith, and all the friends you love most fondly are friends of Christ, so that your deepest solicitudes, your dearest desires on their behalf, are sweetly at rest and satisfied, because, from your experience of the Saviour's preciousness, you know that having him they have all things worth your wishing for them. Still your heart is forced to bleed on their account, from the sight or knowledge of their intense sufferings, either from severe bodily disease, or acute mental anguish arising from some of those innumerable sources of sorrow, of which our world, that great reservoir of affliction, is so full!

If this be so, I will not bid you to weep no more—for the highest of all authorities commands you to "weep with those who weep!" and the highest of all examples encourages such sympathizing tears; for

when he saw the Jews weeping, and the sisters of Lazarus weeping beside their brother's tomb, "Jesus wept!" But I will bid you wipe away your tears for the present, and look away for a while from the sorrows now felt by those you love, to the joys of which you shall see them in possession in the day of Christ's appearing, when you shall behold them among the crowd of rejoicing saints, surrounding the Saviour in that glorious day! All their tears wiped away by God's own hand! not a trace of sorrow lingering about them, but every expression of their countenance, every tone of their voice telling you that they are *as* happy as Jesus can make them! *therefore* as happy as even your heart—deeply as it loves them and desires their happiness—can wish them to be!

Oh, what a glorious transformation will you behold in them, as well as experience in yourself, on that day of restitution to the redeemed, of all that sin had marred or taken away!

Those brows on which you now so often see the cloud of sadness resting, you shall *then* see beaming with the brightness of a crown of glory—that cheek, now so pale with wasting disease or nights of sleeplessness, shall then be glowing with the radiant smile of conscious immortality! Those eyes, now so often dimmed with tears, shall then be sparkling with more than seraph joy! Those hands, now hanging down in helpless feebleness, or lifted up in agonizing supplication for supporting strength, shall then be sweeping, with a rapturous exultation, one of the golden harps of heaven! That voice, now so faint with weakness, or tremulous with anguish, shall then be heard by you shouting the conqueror's song of triumph, or joining with you and all the hosts of the

redeemed in the chorus of adoring praise to "the Lamb that was slain!" In a word, that heart which is now as full of sorrow as a child of God's can ever be, shall then be filled with all the fulness of joy—a joy altogether unspeakable and full of glory.

6. But it may be that your grief is, in one sense, of a yet deeper shade, your sorrow, on account of the objects of your fondest affections, may be like that of the bereaved mourner of old, "refusing to be comforted because they *are not!*"

Death, that cruel severer of the dearest earthly ties, has torn them from your embrace! The grave has closed over their beloved forms; and thus hidden from your eyes for the "for ever" of time, what gave to this wilderness world all its charm? When they travelled by your side, their gladdening smile and fond companionship made the dreariest spots in the desert look bright, and the rough places smooth! But now they are gone—their smile has past away from earth for ever—you must travel the remainder of your journey in loneliness of heart—a dark and heavy cloud rests on all the scenes of earthly enjoyment, a cloud which shall never pass away! If this be so, I will not bid you *not* to sorrow..

The Apostle of the Gentiles, who said to his weeping friends, while parting from them as he feared for ever upon earth, "What mean ye to weep and to *break mine heart!*" he knew the human heart too well to desire his beloved Thessalonian converts not to sorrow for the friends in Christ they had loved and lost; but I will desire you, as he did them, "*not to sorrow as others who have no hope.*"

I would remind you, as he reminded the Thessalonian mourners, "that if we believe that Jesus died

and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him!"

Yes! Christian mourner, I would bid you look forward, when such sorrow overwhelms you, to the day of Christ's appearing, and your sorrow shall be turned into joy. I doubt not that in the intermediate state, the emancipated spirits of those who in life loved in Christ, will know each other, will meet with the most blissful recognition, and rejoice together in the anticipation of this glorious day; but it is when the day itself arrives that you shall see those for whom you mourn, as radiantly encircled with glory, as triumphantly exulting with happiness as you can desire—*never again* to lose sight of them—*never again* to be parted from them, but to enjoy everlasting communion with them in the presence of the Lord.

Habituate your mind, then, to dwell on the delightful contrast between the happiest intercourse you ever enjoyed with those from whom death has separated you for a season, with what you will enjoy with them when in your Father's house in heaven you are re-united for ever? *Here* your sympathy was constantly called into the most painful exercise to share in sorrows which you vainly strove to soothe; and participate in trials you could neither alleviate nor remove.

There your sympathy will be only and everlastingly called forth into the most gladdening exercise, to share with those beloved ones in their fulness of joy, and participate in their satisfying pleasures for evermore.

Here your heart was often pained to see in them inconsistencies of character, which disfigured the Re-

deceiver's image; or improprieties of conduct, which dishonoured the Redeemer's name.

There your heart will eternally rejoice to see their perfectly purified spirits, like a polished mirror, whose surface is unsullied by a speck or stain, reflecting the Redeemer's image, without a single feature being in the smallest degree distorted or dimmed by sin, while every word and action will be undividedly devoted to the Redeemer's glory.

Here your affection for them was continually a snare, drawing you by imperceptible attraction towards the brink of that sin so peculiarly provoking to a jealous God—idolatrous creature love.

There in the immediate presence of a Saviour God, beholding him face to face, you will experience a sweet impossibility of loving any created object in the remotest approach to rivalry with him,—yea, the very sweetest feature of your glorified love for the objects of your affection will be, that it will prove a powerful means of deepening your supreme love to that Saviour God who will be to you and all you love in him, the bond of your union, and the crown of your happiness for ever. For ever! oh, what a contrast these two words supply to your sweet, but short-lived intercourse on earth! For ever! yes! for ever! ages and ages will roll on, but you will still be with those you love. And ages more will pass away, but still their smile will beam on you, and still their voice will gladden you; and thus will it be for ever, and ever and ever.*

Instead of a day of separation, and agony, and

* Practical Reflections on the Second Advent, by H. White, chap. viii. p. 154.

death, the day of the appearing of the Son of Man is to all, whose love for each other has been exalted and hallowed by his smile, a day of happy meetings, a day of blissful re-union for eternity! No more parting pangs! no more last looks of speechless anguish! no more irrepressible burst of tears, when that saddest of all earthly sounds lingers on the expiring lips, pronouncing the last *farewell*. *Farewell*, that word of woe in which ages of suffering seem concentrated, shall never be uttered by the glorified followers of the Lamb, after they meet on the morning of the resurrection, at the right hand of him that sitteth upon the throne; but they shall meet there to part no more, but rejoice together for ever in the presence of the Lord.*

Contrast also the scenes amidst which your affection for those you have loved and lost first commenced, with those amidst which it shall be renewed and perpetuated for ever? Oh, what a glorious contrast between its birth-place and its eternal home! Its birth-place a world where every object bears the stamp of apostacy and alienation from God; where Satan reigns with such fearful supremacy, that he is styled in scripture "The god of this world;" where sin and sorrow hold their united empire; where we feel their united influences within ourselves, see them in those we love best, and witness them wherever we turn our eyes around; where we are constantly brought in collision with those who despise the Saviour that we have learnt to love, and where our sweetest occupations in his service shared with those

* Practical Reflections on the Second Advent, by Hugh White, chap. iv. page 76.

whom we love in him, only give us a deeper insight into, and bring us into closer contact with the frightful mass of guilt and misery with which our rebellious and ruined world abounds. Such has been the nursery of our Christian affections! What will be their home? A world where Satan, sin or sorrow shall never, never come! where every object bears the stamp of loyalty and love to God; where not even a passing sight or sound of suffering shall ever dash, with a single drop of bitterness, the cup of blissful communion with those we love; where all our companions shall glow with such gratitude to the Saviour as burns within our own breast, and all our services shared with the glorified spirits whom, from the endeared recollections of earth, we shall love, even in heaven, with a peculiar tenderness of holy love, shall bring us in contact only with scenes of unmixed joy.

What the precise nature of those services will be, scripture has not revealed to us. We cannot, therefore, speak with any confidence, where the word of God is silent; we must wait, till the hand of God lifts up the veil, which he himself has flung over the future employments of glorified saints throughout eternity.

That services, suitable to their exalted capacities and purified natures will be supplied, we may confidently conclude, both from the constitution of the soul, which must be actively employed, in order to be satisfactorily happy; and from the express assurance of scripture, that when the saints of God shall inhabit the new Jerusalem "they shall serve him day and night, in his temple, and rest not, day or night, singing praises unto him that sitteth upon the

throne and to the Lamb for ever?" While at the same time, we do not doubt that these expressions rather intimate to us the *fact* that glorified spirits shall be ceaselessly employed in serving and praising the God of their salvation, than reveal to us the *precise character* of the services or praises in which they shall be employed;—denote rather their constant habitude of devout adoration, joyful praise and untiring energy, zeal and devotedness to the glory of God, than the specific nature of their celestial and eternal occupations. Yet, Christian reader, by glancing back at some of the happiest hours of hallowed communion you once enjoyed with those who are now with Christ, you may catch a faint glimpse of *what* is reserved for your eternal communion with them, in the immediate presence of the Lord.

If you have found it so unutterably delightful to converse together of the Saviour whom you love, oh, what will it be to converse together *with* the Saviour face to face! Did your hearts burn within you with such glowing fervour of holy joy, when he spake to you by his Spirit, and opened to you the scriptures concerning himself? Oh, then, with what transports will they burn when you shall together drink in the endearing accents of his own blessed voice. If your earthly Sabbath love was so sweet, what will be heaven's eternal Sabbath love? When you caught a passing glimpse of his countenance smiling on you, though but seen through the glass of faith darkly, did it not seem to you as the very gate of heaven? Then what will you feel when, in the midst of all heaven's sights and sounds of blessedness, you shall be permitted to gaze together on the glory of his

countenance, unveiled, in all its brightness, beaming on you the ineffable sweetness of his smile of love to his redeemed !

Oh ! faintly indeed can your happiest hours of Christian communion with those you have loved on earth, enable you to conceive what will be the blissful communion which you shall enjoy with them, when you shall together see the Saviour as he is, in all his glory—shall together expatiate amidst all the wonders of creation, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth—shall trace together, in his presence, the mysteries of his providential government and the deeper mysteries of his redeeming love—survey together the history of your earthly pilgrimage, and behold the secret of all his dealings with you sweetly explained, and his loving-kindness in them all, even the most afflictive, fully unfolded to your view ! shall be attracted together, nearer and nearer, as eternal ages are rolling on, to the uncreated source of all perfection and all blessedness—shall participate together with angels, and archangels, and the general assembly and church of the first-born, in the sublime songs and services of the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—shall be employed together on errands of your Redeemer's love—shall cast your crowns together in thankful adoration, at his feet, and unite your voices together in the everlasting anthem of praise before his throne !

Christian mourner for those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, do you in very truth believe that this prospect shall, ere long, be realized for eternity ? And can you, with this prospect before your view, be now swallowed up with overmuch sorrow ? Can you ever

seem to say, that you have nothing left worth living for, when you can live for the glory of him who, with his own blood, has purchased for you and the best beloved of your soul, an eternity of *such* a communion of endearing love and overflowing bliss? *

* Practical Reflections on the Second Advent, by Hugh White, chap. viii. p. 171.



H Y M N S

SUITABLE FOR THE TIME OF AFFLCTION.



H Y M N S .

CROSSES WELCOMED BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

NEWTON.

'Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross ;
But the Saviour's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss.
Trials must and will befall,
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me.

God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain and toil ;
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else o'erspread the soil :
Trials make the promise sweet ;
Trials give new life to prayer ;
Trials bring me to his feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.

Did I meet no trials here,
No kind chastenings by the way ;
Might I not with reason fear
I should prove a cast-away ?
Worldlings may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight,
But the true-born child of God
Must not—would not, if he might.

PROSPECT OF FUTURE REST.

W. P. HUTTON.

Where shall the weary rest ?
The child of sorrow, where ?
In Jesus' arms, for ever blest,
Soon shall be banish care !

When shall the sufferer's pain,
The groan of anguish cease ?
In heaven the saints no more complain,
But all is endless peace !

When shall temptation's power
No longer break repose ?
There comes a near, a blissful hour,
Which no disturbance knows !

When shall this aching heart,
With every loved one dwell ?
In worlds above they never part,
There, never say ' Farewell ! '

Where is the blest abode
Whence none shall ever roam?
There, in the presence of our God,
Is our eternal home!

Lord, in that happy land,
From sin and sorrow free,
Grant us among thy chosen band
To live in joy with thee!

FOLLOWING CHRIST.

WESLEY.

Master! I would no longer be
Loved by the world that hated thee,
But patient in thy footsteps go,
Thy sorrow as thy joy to know.

I would, and O! bestow the power,
With meekness meet the darkest hour;
The shame despise, however tried,
For thou wast scorned and crucified.

I welcome still thy faithful word,
“The cross shall meet its sure reward,”
For soon must pass the “little while,”
When joy will crown thy servant’s toil.

I wait to hear the Saviour say,
“Servant, arise, and come away;
Look up, for thou shalt weep no more,
But rest on heaven’s eternal shore.”

PSALM XIX.

"O Lord, I know that in very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me."

FRY.

For what shall I praise thee, my God and my King?
For what blessings the tribute of gratitude bring?
Shall I praise thee for pleasure, for health or for ease,
For the sunshine of youth, for the garden of peace?

Shall I praise thee for flowers that bloomed on my
breast,
For joys in prospective, and pleasures possessed?
For the spirits that heightened my days of delight,
For the slumbers that sat on my pillow by night?

For this should I thank thee, but if only for this,
I should leave half untold the donation of bliss;
I thank thee for sickness, for sorrow, for care,
For the thorns I have gathered, the anguish I share;

For nights of anxiety, watchings and tears,
A present of pain—a prospective of fears!
I thank thee, I bless thee, my King and my God,
For the good and the evil thy hand hath bestowed!

The flowers were sweet, but their fragrance is flown,
They yielded no fruits, they are withered and gone!
The thorn, it was poignant, but precious to me,
'Twas the message of mercy—it led me to thee!

CHRIST'S INVITATION.

INVALID'S HYMN BOOK.

With tearful eyes I look around ;
Life seems a dark and stormy sea ;
Yet midst the gloom I hear a sound,
A heavenly whisper—" Come to me."

It tells me of a place of rest ;
It tells me where my soul may flee ;
Oh ! to the weary, faint, opprest,
How sweet the bidding—" Come to me."

When the poor heart with anguish learns,
That earthly props resigned must be,
And from each broken cistern turns,
It hears the accents—" Come to me."

When against sin I strive in vain,
And cannot from its yoke get free,
Sinking beneath the heavy chain,
The words arrest me—" Come to me."

When nature shudders, loth to part
From all I love, enjoy and see,
When a faint chill steals o'er my heart,
A sweet voice utters—" Come to me."

Come, for all else must fail and die ;
Earth is no resting-place for thee ;
Heavenward direct thy weeping eye ;
I am thy portion—" Come to me."

O voice of mercy! voice of love
In death's last fearful agony,
Support me—cheer me—from above,
And gently whisper—"Come to me."

In trouble and in grief, O Lord,
Thy smile bath cheered my way,
And joy hath budded from each thorn
Which round my footsteps lay.

The hours of pain have yielded good
Which prosperous days refused;
As herbs, tho' scentless when entire,
Yield fragrance when they're bruised.

The oak strikes deeper, as its boughs
By furious blasts are driven;
So life's vicissitudes the more
Have fixed my hopes on heaven.

Then, gracious Lord, whate'er my lot
In future times may be,
I'll welcome still the heaviest grief
That brings me near to thee.

EDMESTON.

O thou whose mercy guides my way
Tho' now it seem severe,
Forbid my unbelief to say,
There is no mercy here.

O grant me to desire the pain
That comes in kindness down ;
More than the world's supremest gain,
Succeeded by a frown.

Then, tho' thou bend my spirit low,
Love only shall I see :
The very hand that strikes the blow
Was wounded once for me !

INVALID'S HYMN BOOK.

Lord, when I see thee as thou art,
No sufferings then will wake a sigh ;
Grant the one wish that fills my heart,
To glorify thee ere I die.

When I would wonder and complain,
Fix on thy cross my tearful eye ;
Mine is far lighter to sustain,
O make me patient ere I die.

**What countless blessings thou hast given,
Though health it please thee to deny !
Thy precious blood—a home in heaven !
O make me thankful ere I die.**

**Thou art my stem, my life, my root ;
Sap to thy feeblest branch supply ;
Those who “ abide in thee ” bear fruit—
O make me fruitful ere I die.**

**O prove by making all things new,
Thou dost within me rule, not I ;
Let grace the carnal mind subdue,
And make me heavenly ere I die.**

**None without holiness can see
Thy glorious beauty, eye to eye ;
But if my heart thy temple be,
I shall be holy ere I die.**

**This, this alone can safety give,
When death’s appalling hour draws nigh ;
If it be “ Christ ” to me “ to live,”
It will be “ gain ” indeed “ to die.”**

AFFLICTION NEEDFUL.

HAWEIS.

**Submissive to thy will, my God,
I all to thee resign :
Bowing beneath thy chastening rod,
I mourn, but not repine.**

Why should my foolish heart complain,
When wisdom, truth, and love,
Direct the stroke, inflict the pain,
And point to joys above !

How short are all my sufferings here !
How needful every cross !
Away my unbelieving fear,
Nor call my gain a loss !

Then give, O Lord ! or take away :
I bless thy sacred name,
My Saviour, yesterday, to-day,
For ever, is the same.

COMFORT IN AFFLICITION.

D. T. K. DRUMMOND.

Mourners of Zion ! hear the sound
Of your Redeemer's voice ;
He smites that he may heal your wound,
And lead you to rejoice.

Sons of affliction ! Christ is near,
To bid your sorrows cease,
To raise your hope, to soothe your fear,
To guide you into peace.

Children of sorrow ! He is nigh,
To bear your heavy load ;
Then fearless to his bosom fly,
Your sympathizing God.

God of the mourner, hear our prayer,
To thee we look for aid ;
On thee we cast our grief and care
For thou the price hast paid.

Beneath thy sheltering wing of love,
Our weary souls we'll hide,
Then safe within thy courts above
In endless joy abide.

THY WILL BE DONE.

INVALID'S HYMN BOOK.

My God and Father ! while I stray
Far from my home in life's rough way,
O teach me from my heart to say,
" Thy will be done ! "

Though dark my path, and sad my lot,
Let me " be still," and murmur not,
But breathe the prayer divinely taught,
" Thy will be done."

What though in lonely grief I sigh,
For friends beloved, no longer nigh,
Submissive still I would reply,
" Thy will be done ! "

If thou shouldst call me to resign
What most I prize—it ne'er was mine ;
I only yield thee what was thine :
" Thy will be done ! "

Should pining sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father! still I strive to say,
“ Thy will be done ! ”

If but my fainting heart be blest,
With thy sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God! to thee I leave the rest—
“ Thy will be done ! ”

Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,—
“ Thy will be done ! ”

Then when on earth I breathe no more
The prayer oft mixed with tears before,
I'll sing upon a happier shore,
“ Thy will be done ! ”

IN SOLITUDE AND SICKNESS.

INVALID'S HYMN-BOOK.

Cease thou from man! Oh, what to thee
Can thy poor fellow-mortals be?
Are they not erring, finite, frail?
What can their utmost aid avail?

Their very love will prove a snare;
Then, when thy heart becomes aware
Of its own danger, it will bleed,
For leaning on a broken reed.

**Why does thy bliss so much depend
On earthly relative or friend ?
There is a friend who changes never,
The love he gives, is given for ever.**

**He has withdrawn thee, now, apart,
To teach these lessons to thy heart ;
Has darkened all thy earthly scene,
That thou on him alone may'st lean.**

**His precious love the balm supplies,
For which thy wounded spirit sighs ;
That only medicine can make whole
The weary, faint, and sin-sick soul.**

**Go to that Friend, poor aching heart ;
He knows how desolate thou art :
He waits, he longs, to see thee blest,
And in himself to give thee rest.**

JOB XXXVI. 10.

“ He openeth their ear to discipline.”

INVALID'S HYMN-BOOK

**Chamber of sickness ! much to thee I owe
Though dark thou be ;
The lessons it imports me most to know
I owe to thee :
A sacred seminary thou hast been,
I trust, to train me for a happier scene.**

Chamber of sickness ! suffering and alone,
My friends withdrawn,
The blessed beams of heavenly truth have shone
On me forlorn,
With such a hallowed vividness and power,
As ne'er was granted to a brighter hour.

Chamber of sickness ! midst thy silence oft
A voice is heard,
Which though it fall like dew on flowers, so soft,
Yet speaks each word
Into the aching heart's unseen recess,
With power no earthly accents could possess.

Chamber of sickness ! in that bright abode,
Where there is no more pain,
If, through the merits of my Saviour God,
A seat I gain,
This theme shall tune my golden heart's soft lays,
That in thy shelter passed my earthly days.

HEB. XII. 5.

" My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord."

NEWTON.

When the Lord rebukes his servant,
'Tis to save and not destroy ;
'Tis to make my spirit fervent,
'Tis to give me real joy ;
'Tis to make me better know
That my rest is not below.

Shall I then repine at trials,
By my Father's love decreed?
What if God had poured the vials
Of his wrath upon my head?
Death, of sin the wages is;
All is mercy short of this.

Since the Lord has given me reason,
To expect a place above;
In affliction's sharpest season,
Let me own that "God is love;"
Let me own that all he does,
From paternal kindness flows.

Shall I murmur at his dealings?
Shall I not his kindness trust?
Since he knows my frame and feelings,
And remembers I am dust;
Shall I not receive the rod,
And confess the hand of God?

Hear me, Lord, in my petition;
O sustain me, lest I faint!
Teach me patience and submission;
Keep thy servant from complaint;
And in every trying hour,
Lord, uphold me by thy power!

PRAYER FOR RESIGNATION.

STEELE.

And can my heart aspire so high,
To say " My Father, God ! "
Lord, at thy feet I fain would lie
And learn to kiss the rod.

I would submit to all thy will,
For thou art good and wise ;
Let every anxious thought be still,
Nor one faint murmur rise.

Thy love can cheer the darksome gloom,
And bid me wait serene,
Till hopes and joys immortal bloom,
And brighten all the scene.

" My Father ! " O permit my heart
To plead her humble claim,
And ask the bliss those words impart
In my Redeemer's name !

CHRIST PROMISING THE COMFORTER.

MEDLEY.

Come ye who know the Saviour's love,
And his indulgent mercies prove,
In cheerful songs his praise express,
He does not leave you comfortless.

**He ever acts the Saviour's part,
With strong compassion in his heart;
The least and weakest saint to bless,
He will not leave them comfortless.**

**And while they sojourn still below,
Wandering in this world of woe,
Through storms and floods of deep distress,
He will not leave them comfortless.**

**And when they pass death's gloomy vale,
And flesh and mortal powers fail,
Joyful their dying lips confess,
He does not leave them comfortless.**

FAITH IN CHRIST'S UNCHANGING LOVE.

COMBES.

**In every trouble, sharp and strong,
My soul to Jesus flies ;
My anchor-hold is firm in him,
When swelling billows rise.**

**His comforts bear my spirits up ;
I trust a faithful God ;
The sure foundation of my hope
Is in a Saviour's blood.**

**Loud hallelujahs sing, my soul,
To thy Redeemer's name !
In joy, in sorrow, life and death,
His love is still the same.**

THE BELIEVER'S FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IN SUFFERING.

CONDER.

How shall I follow him I serve ?
How shall I copy him I love ?
Nor from those blessed footsteps swerve
Which lead me to his seat above ?

Privations, sorrows, bitter scorn,
The life of toil, the mean abode,
The faithless kiss, the crown of thorn,
Are these the consecrated road ?

'Twas thus he suffered, though a son,
Foreknowing, choosing, feeling all ;
Until the perfect work was done,
And drank the bitter cup of gall.

Lord ! should my path through suffering lie,
Forbid that I should ere repine,
Still let me turn to Calvary,
Nor heed my griefs, remembering thine.

O let me think how thou didst leave
Untasted every pure delight,
To fast, to faint, to watch, to grieve,
The toilsome day, the homéless night.

To faint, to grieve, to die for me !
Thou camest not thyself to please,
And dear as earthly comforts be,
Shall I not love thee more than these ?

Yes, I would count them all but loss,
To gain the notice of thine eye,
Flesh shrinks and trembles at the cross,
But thou canst give the victory.

GOD EVER PRESENT TO BLESS.

Still in a world of sin and pain,
Far from our home we meet again,
Dreary and long our course may be ;
But, O our God ! it leads to thee ;
To thee, O Lord of life, we come ;
Thou art our everlasting home !

Thy hand is still around to bless,
Thou dost not leave us comfortless ;
Earth and its pain we still may feel,
But thou art ever near to heal ;
Still as our day, our strength shall be,
For all our cares are borne by thee.

Still as time's changing current rolls,
Thy comforts, Lord, delight our souls ;
Thy mighty arm to smooth our way—
Thy light to turn our night to day,—
To thee, O Lord of life, we come ;
Thou art our everlasting home !

PRAYERS

**SUITABLE FOR THE TIME OF GREAT
AFFLCTION.**



P R A Y E R S.

O THOU, who knowest our frame ; who rememberest that we are dust ; who sent thine own Son not only to relieve but to carry the sorrows of man, receive the strong crying and tears of thine afflicted servant. All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me ; I have seen affliction by the rod of thy mouth, I have passed under the yoke, and my spirit is overwhelmed within me ; and yet, Lord, to whom shall I go but unto thee ; none can hear or answer as thou dost ; behold, then, I come weary and heavy laden with the burden of my sorrow. Oh, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I, that I may find rest unto my soul.

Lord, I know that in faithfulness thou dost afflict ; I know that thou dost chastise those whom thou lovest, and dost scourge every son whom thou receivest ; I know that thou dost not afflict for thy pleasure, but for the profiting of thy children, and yet I feel as a broken reed. I tremble and am sore vexed, as if some strange thing had happened unto me ; I

mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; I shrink under the deep furrowings of affliction. O why should I thus sink down under the fatherly correction of thy hand? Gracious God, behold in mercy, and forgive the weakness of the flesh, and in the fulness of thy love, undertake for me in the depth of my sorrow.

Lord, my soul goes forth to thee, from the agony of its grief; oh do thou meet it with the blessed fulness of thy consolation and grace. Place beneath me the everlasting arms; say to my sinking spirit, Be strong, fear not; let me now prove the mightiness of thy power, as well as the greatness of thy love, by the upholding of thy free Spirit. To the covert of thy wings I fly, that not only until this calamity be overpast, but that for ever, I may abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Oh bear up the drooping languishing spirit within, by giving me nearer and more heartfelt views of my blessed Saviour's love and sympathy. May I realize in the very depths of my wounded heart, the tender pity, the unalterable friendship, the compassionate fellowship of him, who, though now exalted at thy right hand, has yet a feeling for our infirmities, even as in the days of his flesh he wept over the sorrows of his people. I would cast my care on him, for he is able and willing to bear.

And, Lord, I do not only desire to resign myself without a murmur to thy dispensations—I do not only desire to say obediently and submissively, “Thy will be done”—but I desire to love the chastisement, crushing though it be; I desire to kiss the rod in the hand of my Father, to find the bitter sweet, and to feed my soul on the discipline which thou hast appointed for my growth in grace, and advancement in holiness.

I would be joyful as well as patient in tribulation, cheerful as well as resigned, though sorrowful yet alway rejoicing ; and, above all, lead me, I most earnestly beseech thee, since thou art blessing me by a fellowship with Christ in suffering, to a fellowship with him in spirit ; may I watch every feature of his bright example in the day of his sorrow and humiliation, and may the same mind and conduct be in me which was also in him. And may the greatness of every earthly trial, and the continuance of earthly sorrow, have this one blessed effect upon me, to drive me nearer and closer to the footsteps of him who passed through the vale of suffering before me, that I may regard him more narrowly, and follow him more faithfully.

And may the Spirit of my beloved master fill my aching heart, bind up its wounds, and pour the balm of heavenly joy on its earthly sorrows. May he so form Christ within me, that he may be all my desire, as well as all my salvation ; that the eye of my faith and love may ever rest on one who changeth not ; that the breathing of my heart's desire may ever be towards the Creator and not the creature, to God and not an idol ; and thus, looking at the things which are not seen and which are eternal, and having my life hid with Christ in God, may I, through the briers and thorns of the wilderness, pass to my purchased inheritance, where there shall be no night of sorrow, but an eternal morning of joy. Oh hear me, and send me peace out of Zion; for his sake, who quenched not the smoking flax, nor broke the bruised reed, Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.*

* Rev. D. T. K. Drummond.

UNDER HEAVY TRIALS AND BEREAVEMENTS.

O merciful and gracious Father, who “dost not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;” who “though thou causest grief, yet wilt also have compassion;” I come before thee bowed down under the weight of thy chastening hand, “Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me!” Help me now to pour out my sorrows unto thee, and to ease my heart of its heavy load, by unburdening it at a throne of grace. O gracious Father, though thou hast seen fit to bring me into the furnace of affliction, yet I know that thou art with me there; though bereaved, I am not forsaken, though “cast down,” I am not “destroyed;” O may I now experience the fulness of thy gracious promise, “when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” Help me, O my heavenly Father, not only to acquiesce in thy blessed will, not only from my heart to cry in patience and submission of soul, *Thy will be done*, but O enable me to rejoice in thy holy will, to be ready to do, or to suffer that will, as seemeth best to thee.

Lord, help me to “glorify thee in the fires.” Give me a heart to praise thee, not only for all thy past mercies in providence and grace, not only for all the blessings with which thou hast sweetened my earthly pilgrimage, but above all these may I be enabled to bless thee for sorrow and sufferings! May I drink with cheerfulness this bitter cup, which thou hast put into my hand. Lord, I desire to bless thee

and praise thee for every sorrow, for every bereavement, for every affliction, however severe, by which I may be brought nearer unto thee, experience more of the riches of thy grace, more of the tender sympathy of my precious Saviour, more of the power of the Holy Ghost to sustain and comfort my burdened soul. O help me to welcome every cross which conforms me more to my blessed Saviour's image ; may I rejoice that I am counted worthy to follow in the footsteps of my divine Master ; may I, like him, be enabled to exclaim—"The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?" O blessed Jesus ! thou wast thyself "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" thou "canst be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." O have mercy upon me, calm and soothe my troubled soul ! speak peace to my mind,—that peace which passeth all understanding. Thou didst say to the stormy waves, "Peace, be still," O Saviour, now, in the depth of this my sorrow, speak peace to my sinking soul ; now, "when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I ;" help me, gracious Father, to remember that though my earthly stream of bliss may be dried up, there is a fountain which can never fail, full and overflowing ; that though friend after friend depart, though thou "takest from me the desire of mine eyes with a stroke," though the beloved object of all my earthly hopes and affections may be gone for ever, yet that thou, the *Friend* of sinners, will never forsake me ; thou hast promised to be the Father of the fatherless, and the God of the widow ; thou canst fill up every aching void which death has made. O my Father, I lift my sorrowing soul to thee, pour into it the consolations of thy Holy Spirit ;

silence every murmur; calm every fear; dispel every doubt, and enable me from my heart to say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

O Lord, I know that the gracious end of all thy dealings with us, is "to take away sin," to conform us more to thy blessed image, and to fit us for thy presence, where is "fulness of joy;" I know that he whom thou lovest thou chastenest; O may I glory in this distinguishing proof of thy love; may I kiss the rod, may I welcome every stroke, and may I not desire so much deliverance out of trouble, as grace and strength to glorify thee in the midst of it. May the rod bud and blossom in thine hand, and bring forth in me much fruit, to thy praise and glory!

Lord, I would by every affliction be drawn closer unto thee; I would cling to thee as a child to its loving father; I would take every trial as a message of tender mercy, inviting me to draw nearer to thy bosom,—to taste more of thy sweetness; thine all-sufficiency; to drink more largely of the inexhaustible stream of thy love.

Preserve me, O my Father, from the greatest of all miseries, affliction *unsanctified, unapplied*. O may every trial, every chastisement, answer the blessed end for which it is sent. O my God, if thy past dealings with me have not been received by me as they ought; if they have not answered thy gracious design; if they have not been sanctified and blessed as thou wouldest have them to be. O even now, heavenly Father, may the blessed fruits appear. May the peaceable fruits of righteousness be brought forth in me, and may I be enabled to declare with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted.

Hear me, O blessed Lamb of God, who thyself didst bear our sins and carried our infirmities, thou who dost sympathise with us in all our sorrows, O hear me now, and grant me such a sweet sense of thy presence with me, as may cheer and comfort me in this dark night of sorrow, and enable me to look forward to that blessed world where sin, and sorrow, and death can never enter, but where we shall be “with thee where thou art,” and be made partakers of thy joy. O gracious Lord, send to me thy Holy Spirit, to comfort me, to open to me the unsearchable riches of thy *word*; may its blessed truths be brought home at this time with *power* and *unction* to my soul. Hear me, blessed Lord, for the sake of my beloved Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

H. D.

UNDER GREAT DOUBT AND PERPLEXITY OF MIND.

O “God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob,” who hast led me hitherto; who knowest the way that I should take, and whose high prerogative it is to bring light out of darkness, I come to thee in the midst of my present doubt and perplexity: I am ignorant, do thou teach me. Thou seest, Lord, that the desire of my heart is to be led by thee. I would be as a little child, afraid to stir a step alone, clinging to my Father’s hand, trusting to him for guidance and direction.

O Lord, “the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;” thou only knowest what is for thy glory, and my own ever-

lasting good, O lead me and guide me ; leave me not to myself, suffer me not to have a will of mine own.

O gracious Lord, thou didst lead thine ancient people every step of their wanderings, by a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud by day, so now lead me by the guidance of thy Holy Spirit, that I may not turn to the right hand or to the left, but that I may choose the right way. O shed the blessed light of thy Spirit upon my path ; make darkness light before me, and crooked things straight ; reveal to me thy blessed will. Lord, I would wait patiently for the indications of thy will concerning me ; I would follow where thou leadest, only leave me not to myself. " If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." May all my wanderings here below only lead me nearer and nearer to my Father's house ; and however dark and intricate, however thorny and sad the way may appear to me at present, yet may I hereafter be led to acknowledge that it has been a *right* way ; and Oh may it lead me at length to thy presence, where is fulness of joy ; and to thy right hand, where are pleasures for evermore. Hear me, O Lord, for the sake of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

H. D.

FOR RESIGNATION UNDER AFFLICITION.

O Lord, my covenant God and Father in Christ Jesus ! for his sake, bow down thine ears to thy poor suffering child now before thy throne of grace, and grant me an entire resignation to thy blessed and all-righteous will in all things. Whatever thou seest fit

to do with me, may I be patiently submissive, assured that all thou doest is right, and that though I know not now the reasons of thy dispensations, yet hereafter I shall know: enable me then to trust to that wisdom which cannot err, and to that love which never fails; knowing, from thy sacred word, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love thee." Grant me a measure of that filial temper so admirably manifested by thine own dear Son, when he ascended Calvary for our sake; with him I desire to say from my heart, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." Let me not even in thought dare to murmur against my God and Father; no, rather let me kiss and adore the paternal hand which holds the rod over me, however severe and repeated its strokes may be. Behold, here I am, do with me as shall seem best to thee. I know, whatever it may be, "it is, it shall be well."

I pray that my sore affliction may not make me unmindful of, or thankless for thine unnumbered mercies, which have been so unsparingly showered down on my unworthy head. Blessed be the Lord, that many sweet and undeserved ones are still mingled in my bitter cup. I earnestly desire to be enabled to glorify thee in the furnace of affliction, to manifest thy power and grace in the support thou affordest such a feeble worm as I am; so may the hearts of my fellow-Christians be strengthened to trust more and more in thee.

I pray, O my heavenly Father, that all my affliction may be sanctified to the good of my soul. May it purify it more and more from its sins; may it be melted, to enable it to receive more deeply the impression of my Saviour's image. May I from expe-

rience feel that it is good for me that I have been afflicted. So increase my faith and hope, that my heart may ascend more and more to that unspeakably blessed world, where sorrow can never come; where we shall see, that however rough our passage to it has been, thou hast nevertheless led us by the right way. Not one trial will then be found needless. If it be thy good pleasure, give me that full assurance of hope, which shall enable me to realize that seeming paradox of St. Paul, "though sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Hear me, O my God, and grant me a precious answer of peace, for the sake of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*

FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD AND SPIRITUAL COMFORT.

Blessed and gracious Lord ! I thy poor, weak, sinful child, beseech thee, for Jesus' precious sake, to accept my imperfect petitions, offered only through his all-prevailing intercession.

Thou seest how cast down my poor soul is, how I go mourning, deprived of the light of thy countenance. How dark is my path, how sorely assaulted I am by the fiery darts of the enemy of souls, and how totally unable I am to kindle a spark of hope or love in my own heart ! O my heavenly Father ! take pity on thy sorrowful creature, speak peace to my dejected heart, raise up my wounded soul, bind it up in the all-healing balm of Gilead, the precious, purifying blood of thy dear Son ; and bless me with the

* From "Prayers and Meditations for Private Use."

longed-for manifestation of thy free love for me, of thy full forgiveness, and of my personal interest in the compassionate Saviour of sinners.

Enable me to feel that I am a branch of the true Vine, united to Him by faith, and bringing forth fruit to thy glory, and my own great comfort, as evidence of my spiritual life.

Blessed Lord ! enable me to enjoy sweet communion with thee through the Son of thy love ; and so sanctify my heart by thy Holy Spirit, that it may be my meat and drink to do thy blessed will. O take away my heart of stone, and give me one of flesh ; tender, and shrinking from the least approach to sin. Call off my thoughts and affections more and more from vain earthly objects, and raise them to thy glorious self, to the precious Lamb, to the ineffable felicity of heaven. May my ardent desire be to awake up after thy likeness, to behold thy face in glory : to enjoy thine eternal presence ; to live throughout a blessed eternity, devoted to thy service and praise. If thou seest fit, my God, take away from me the fear of death. May I be enabled, through grace, to feel that its sting for me is taken away, and to regard it rather as a happy entrance into my glorious home, than as a dark and frightful passage out of this sinful world.

But whether it be thy blessed will that I should still walk on in darkness, uncheered by the visible light of thy favour, or that thou, in rich mercy, wilt disperse the clouds that surround me, and give me to rejoice in the tokens of thy pardoning love,—still, O my heavenly Father, enable me to trust in thee, yea, even though thou shouldest seem to cast me from thee; still give me strength to cling to the Rock

of ages ; and let nothing shake my firm reliance on that precious Saviour, who has declared that “ those who come unto him shall in no wise be cast out.”

For his all-prevailing sake, hear and answer me abundantly. Amen.*

* From “ Prayers and Meditations for Private Use.”

THE END.







